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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 59 *(continued)*

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Draft resolution (A/52/L.7)

Amendment (A/52/L.47)

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate once again in the debate on this item on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

At the outset, the Kingdom of Swaziland associate itself fully with the well-known position of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as that of the African Group, which was adopted at the Organization of African Unity summit meeting of Heads of State and Government held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in June this year. Within the framework of these positions, the Kingdom of Swaziland wishes to make a few comments on the issues at hand.

My delegation is concerned at the slow progress in the ongoing deliberations on ways to restructure and democratize the Security Council. When this process began in earnest in 1993 the world had high expectations that at last the United Nations had realized the wisdom of redressing the imbalance that exists in Security Council representation within a reasonable time-frame. It is now for the fourth consecutive year that the General Assembly continues to consider the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. After this time, we hope that many delegations will not pontificate on their positions over and over again, because the various positions are very well known by now. It is the view of my delegation that we should begin another phase to engage more in deep and frank negotiations in good faith, if we are to reach a compromise on the issues.

The Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group have presented concrete proposals that must be taken into account by the Open-ended Working Group concerned during its next meeting, in the endeavour to reach a decision. As in all negotiations, delegations must now demonstrate their willingness to move away from their entrenched positions.

The Kingdom of Swaziland wishes to underscore that within the general context of the revitalization and restructuring of the Organization primacy should be accorded to the principles of democracy and the sovereign equality of States. In this regard, enlargement of the Security Council, particularly the permanent membership, is not only necessary but justifiable, to make it more reflective of the universal character of the United Nations. In the same vein, we wish to reiterate that strengthening the role of the General Assembly is central to the current exercise of restructuring the Security Council, to ensure transparency in the work of the entire Organization.

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The issue of permanent membership is at the very heart and soul of the matter. The position of my country was articulated in our country statement delivered from this podium by His Majesty King Mswati III during the general debate. We also reiterate the African common position for a modest demand of at least two permanent seats in the Council. Africa makes it clear that seats allocated to the regional groups should be subject to nomination by their regions for eventual election by the General Assembly.

This method would reduce, and ultimately remove, the focus on narrow national interests that currently characterize the decisions of the Council. Members of the Security Council must individually and collectively act in the interest of international peace and security, not in their narrow national interests. The principle of regional seats would go a long way towards ensuring this. Criteria such as the size, power, population or even wealth of a country would be flawed, for these factors are not constant. The new system must also be subject to periodic review. Not every method would assist in meeting this noble objective.

On the question of the veto, the Kingdom of Swaziland fully subscribes to the well-known position of the Non-Aligned Movement. With the demise of the cold war and the emergence of a new international world order, the continuation of the veto power can no longer be justified. Regrettably, we should resign ourselves to the painful reality that the veto will remain a permanent feature as a strong nucleus that pulls the permanent members together. However, we continue to hold the view that in the globalization phenomenon of interdependence, where consultations and consensus characterize decision-making, the veto no longer serves any useful purpose for the international system.

Turning to the working methods of the Security Council, the Kingdom of Swaziland believes that the Council should take further measures to enhance its working methods and procedures and to improve its working relationship with other United Nations organs, particularly the General Assembly, and that its provisional rules should be formalized and institutionalized. In this respect, we submit that the paper of the Non-Aligned Movement, given its comprehensive nature on this issue, would go a long way in laying a foundation for substantive discussion of the matter along with those measures already undertaken by the Council in reforming itself.

The reform of the Security Council is the most politically charged subject at the United Nations because of its significant impact on the future direction of the Organization. We therefore understand the impasse in forging a consensus on the issue, given the complexities of the nature of the subject. While we recognize that full and patient discussions and consultations should be continued, my delegation would appeal to all fellow Member States to be flexible. In particular, the permanent members must display their willingness to change their position in an integrated fashion on the overall size of the new Security Council, especially with regard to permanent seats with full powers for developing countries. My delegation looks forward to a fruitful exchange of views on how best to further advance the discussion on Security Council reform during the next meeting of the Open-ended Working Group in mid-January 1998. To that end, we welcome the reappointment of Ambassador Breitenstein, Permanent Representative of Finland, and Ambassador Jayanama, Permanent Representative of Thailand, as co-Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group. We believe that their reappointment will give impetus to the momentum that has already been gained on this issue.

The Assembly will agree that the United Nations always takes the pivotal platform in world community affairs. We have recently been debating the restoration of democracy in various corners of the world. That debate clearly demonstrated how the United Nations is fully geared to ensuring the principle of representativeness, especially democracy. If we speak of democracy, therefore, let us follow the old adage that "charity begins at home". Let us all seriously ask ourselves whether there is democracy within the walls of this Organization, especially the Security Council.

This is the time that we can address seriously the question of democracy, especially within, and by, the United Nations. The question of the permanent five must be an issue of the past if we as the United Nations are to vigorously pursue the principle of democracy.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) *(interpretation from Chinese):* First of all, I wish to extend my congratulations to Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand on their re-election as co-Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council. Thanks to the combined efforts of the two Ambassadors, during the previous session of the General Assembly, the Working Group held discussions on the reform of the Security Council that were even more in-depth and detailed, giving us a clearer picture of the relevant issues. The Chinese delegation believes that under the personal

guidance of the President and with the coordinated hard work of the two co-Vice-Chairmen, the Working Group will be able to conduct its work smoothly during this session of the General Assembly.

The core issue in the reform of the Security Council is how to enlarge it. The Chinese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen pointed out in his statement during this year's general debate that:

> "The enlargement of the Security Council should follow the principle of equitable geographical distribution and ensure a proper balance between developing and developed countries. The Security Council will better perform the lofty mission entrusted to it under the United Nations Charter only when it becomes more broadly representative." [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 9th meeting]

In 1963, the membership of the Security Council grew from 11 to 15. Since then there have been tremendous changes on the world stage, the most important of which is the emergence of a vast number of developing countries. Developing countries represent more than two thirds of the total United Nations membership and have an ever-growing influence on world affairs. The reform of the Security Council, one of the principal organs of the United Nations system, should first and foremost reflect this change and redress the longstanding imbalance in geographical representation in the Security Council, particularly the imbalance between the developed and developing countries.

The question before us was first placed on the agenda of the General Assembly in 1979 at the request of nine developing countries. It has now been under consideration in the General Assembly for 19 years running. At its forty-eighth session, in 1993, the General Assembly decided to establish the Open-ended Working Group on the question of equitable representation of an increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. This Group has now been working for four consecutive years. However, big differences on the enlargement of the Security Council continue to exist. One of the reasons for this is the failure to resolve the question of how to redress the existing imbalance in the Security Council between the developed and developing countries.

It is noteworthy that as a result of discussions in the Working Group over the past several years, the so-called "quick- fix" proposal — that is, admitting some countries into the Security Council first — has been rejected. However, a small number of countries are still using such arguments as "to view the question practically and take into full consideration the actual situation in various different regions" as an excuse to apply double standards and discriminate against developing countries. We should be especially vigilant against such quick fixes "through the back door". We believe that the legitimate demand for equitable representation of the developing countries in the Security Council is widely recognized and supported by all countries. This hard-won common understanding should be the basis and prerequisite for the future reform of the Council. Any reform plan that deviates from this common understanding will not be feasible.

I should also like to stress that the Charter of the United Nations has entrusted the Security Council with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The enlargement of the Security Council should help strengthen the Council's ability to carry out this task, promote peace and stability in various regions and avert any escalation of regional confrontations or conflicts among Member States. Reform of the Council should also enable it better to reflect the collective will and shared aspirations of Member States, instead of turning it into a club for the rich or the board of directors of a company.

Another important aspect of the reform of the Security Council is improving its working methods and enhancing the transparency of its work while ensuring its efficiency, so that Member States can understand better and participate to a greater extent in the Council's work. The working methods of the Council have undergone continual improvements over the past few years. The Working Group of the Security Council concerning the Council's documentation and other procedural questions has undertaken considerable efforts in this regard, and the General Assembly Working Group has also put forward a number of useful proposals. All this has helped further to improve the Council's work. Of course, improving the working methods of the Security Council is a gradual process that needs to be continually perfected. We hope to see more progress in this field.

As the only developing country among the permanent members of the Security Council, China has always supported, and worked actively for, an improvement in the working methods of the Council and enhanced transparency in its work. Last month, when it held the presidency of the Council, China not only devoted a great deal of attention to improving the efficiency of the Council's work while handling

effectively many urgent issues and emergency situations, but also tried hard to enhance the transparency of the Council's work by briefing non-Council members on the same day that consultations were held and reporting in time to the President of the General Assembly and to the Chairmen of the various regional Groups on the working arrangements of the Council and relevant developments. At the request of Council members, preliminary discussions on questions of interest to a vast number of Member States, such as the issue of sanctions, were also arranged. China is ready to discuss with fellow United Nations Member States possible ways to further improve the working methods of the Council.

The Chinese delegation has always held that reform of the Security Council should not only be handled with a sense of urgency but also treated seriously and cautiously, so that whatever emerges from the reform process in future will be able to stand the test of time. We are in favour of enlarging the Council, but we are also of the view that on such a major question as the reform of the Security Council — a question that affects the interests of all countries — extensive and considered discussions and consultations should be held to try to reach consensus, or at least near-consensus. Relevant proposals on the reform of the Council should be fully discussed in the Working Group set up by the General Assembly so that common understanding can be reached.

Any course of action such as setting a deadline for reform or forcing a vote on certain proposals in the General Assembly when conditions are not yet ripe would bring about serious consequences and is thus inappropriate. We hope that the Working Group will continue to conduct thorough discussions and consultations on the various plans and proposals relating to reform of the Council in a fair and reasonable manner, with adequate openness and transparency, while formulating an overall plan that gives due consideration to all concerned.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt): I will make two statements this afternoon. I had wanted to deliver them separately, but since this is not possible, I will deliver the first statement, in English, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the second, in Arabic, on behalf of Egypt.

With respect to the first statement, first and foremost I should like to thank you, Sir, for the efforts you have exerted. The Non-Aligned Movement welcomes the understanding you have reached that no action will be taken on this item at this stage. The Non-Aligned Movement looks forward to the resumption in mid-January of the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. I should like to assure you that the Non-Aligned Movement will participate actively and constructively during the upcoming session of the Working Group.

I should also like to extend my warmest congratulations to Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand on their re-appointment as Vice-Chairmen of the high- level Open-ended Working Group.

Since the Working Group last met in September 1997 to adopt the final report on its work during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, the Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement met in New York on 25 September and adopted a final communiqué. On the reform and expansion of the Security Council, the Foreign Ministers recalled that

> "discussions on the Open-ended Working Group have shown that while a convergence of views has emerged on a number of issues, important differences still exist on many others".

At their meeting, the Foreign Ministers reviewed, in a comprehensive manner, the discussions on the reform and expansion of the Council in the light of the position papers adopted by the Movement in 1995, 1996 and 1997, the decisions of the Cartagena summit and the decisions adopted at the Twelfth Ministerial Conference held at New Delhi in April 1997.

In the words of the communiqué,

> "In conformity with the New Delhi Declaration regarding the necessity to attain general agreement on the common package of both reform and expansion of the Security Council, they reaffirmed their determination to comply faithfully with the provisions of Article 108 of the Charter with respect to any resolution with Charter amendment implications".

The Ministers recognized that the issue of restructuring the Security Council should be treated as a matter of urgency. They also reaffirmed that efforts at restructuring the Security Council should not be subject to any time-frame, and that no effort should be made to decide this issue before general agreement is reached. Moreover, the

Foreign Ministers affirmed the principles which guide their positions: first, both reform and expansion of the Security Council should be considered as integral parts of a common package, taking into account the principle of the sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical distribution, as well as the need for transparency, accountability and democratization in the working methods and procedures of the Security Council, including its decision-making process; secondly, the gross under-representation of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Security Council should be corrected by enlargement of the Security Council, which should enhance the credibility of the Council, reflect the universal character of the world body, and correct existing imbalances in the composition of the Security Council in a comprehensive manner; thirdly, the extent, nature and modalities of the expansion of the Security Council should be determined on the basis of the principles of equitable geographical distribution and the sovereign equality of States. Attempts to exclude members of the Non-Aligned Movement from any enlargement in the membership of the Security Council would be unacceptable to the movement. Fourthly, the Security Council should be increased by no less than 11 seats; fifthly, the negotiation process should be truly democratic and transparent, and negotiations on all aspects should, in all cases, be held in an open-ended setting.

In my capacity as coordinator on this issue for the Non-Aligned Movement, I have set before the Assembly the principles on which the position of the Non-Aligned Movement rests. Allow me to add that all position papers of the Non-Aligned Movement are official documents of the Open-ended Working Group and that the Non-Aligned Movement remains faithful to the positions expressed in those working papers.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I shall now speak on behalf of the delegation of Egypt. I wish at the outset to congratulate Ambassador Breitenstein and Ambassador Jayanama on their reappointment as Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council.

That issue is of particular importance to Egypt. I stress that it is a very sensitive issue, and we must not rush to reach compromises or partial solutions before reaching a general agreement on this matter. We must continue negotiations in good faith and with open minds in order to agree on a package that combines all the elements of reform and enlargement of the Security Council and that would be acceptable to the large majority of States. Thus we categorically reject efforts at a quick fix, and appeal to those who might be thinking along these lines to reconsider their positions.

The enlargement and reform of the Security Council should not be limited to an increase in permanent seats for developed countries at the expense of developing countries. We must now strike the needed balance in the Council's composition and methods of work. As was stated in the working paper of the Non-Aligned Movement, which sets out the overall framework of the movement's position on expanding the membership of the Security Council, that expansion should be based upon the need for remedying the imbalance reflected in the under-representation of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Security Council. Moreover, any enlargement of the Council should be based on principles of just and equitable geographical representation that upholds the sovereign equality of States.

On that basis, Egypt joins the other States members of the Non-Aligned Movement in their position that any predetermined selection premised upon excluding the States of the Non-Aligned Movement will not be acceptable. Egypt also reaffirms its full commitment to the main principles agreed upon at the two ministerial meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement, held at New Delhi and at New York. In particular, efforts to change the Security Council's composition must not be subjected to an imposed time-frame. Furthermore, the use of the veto should be rationalized through restricting the issues to which the veto applies. The right to veto must not remain uncontrolled. The question of improving the working methods of the Security Council should moreover be addressed on an equal footing with the issue of membership enlargement.

Any decision leading to Security Council reform in terms of the number, composition or geographic distribution of its membership must at all times be subject to the provisions of Article 108 of the Charter. This is the position of Egypt, and is also the position of the Non-Aligned Movement, which it expressed last September. Frankly, anyone calling for a different procedure is in effect calling for the adoption of a General Assembly resolution by a majority of under 124 votes. As a matter of fact, careful examination of the issue of Security Council reform and enlargement — very important subjects — leads us to state that it is vital to accomplish these objectives through a general agreement. This, in

effect, is what General Assembly resolutions since 1993 have called for.

Consequently, the provisions of Article 108 are a safety net, because the application of Article 18, which is reflected in rule 85 of the General Assembly's rules of procedure, leads to the possibility of adopting resolutions by a small majority vote of 70 or 80, a result not commensurate with the importance of issues involving amending the Charter's provisions as they relate to the Security Council.

It is also important to consider the principle of rotation and the criteria for its application to the proposed permanent membership, in order to quiet the divisiveness and conflicts that have emerged. In case it is not possible to reach a consensus on enlarging the Council's permanent membership, Egypt has stated and now reaffirms its view that it should be sufficient to expand only the non-permanent membership of the Council.

What is the best way to agree on criteria for enlarging the Security Council? My delegation considers that this involves absolute realism, faithfully reflecting our contemporary world. Certain States play an active international role; some bear varying degrees of heavy regional responsibilities. At the same time we must take account of the sovereign equality of States so as to provide equitable opportunities with respect to gaining a seat on a Security Council enlarged within the context of democratization. We should also take into account that non-aligned countries represent a numerical majority in our contemporary world. The basic principle of democracy is to take the numerical majority into account. In addition, we must not ignore another dimension of our complex contemporary world: that the majority of the crises and problems that threaten international peace and security involve non-aligned countries. It is therefore imperative to increase their representation in the Security Council in order to mobilize their regional capacity and expertise to contribute towards the resolution of such crises. This would undoubtedly bolster the legitimacy of the Council's work and enhance its credibility.

The delegation of Egypt therefore believes that realism calls for the consideration of the addition of seats to be occupied by a limited number of States from each region by rotation.

Such ideas would allow many countries to shoulder the responsibilities and obligations of Council membership by rotation in each region — a situation that would enhance the role of the Council and promote its credibility.

In this context, we wish to refer to the consensus in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) regarding the right of Africa to occupy two permanent seats in the Council that would be subject to the rotation criterion, within the framework of any arrangement to increase the Council's membership.

On the other hand, it is to be recognized that the quest to create new permanent seats will inevitably face two insurmountable obstacles. The first has to do with the negative implications for the work of the Council as a result of the increase in the number of States that are entitled to the right of veto — I will deal with that later. The second matter has to do with the numerous difficulties that permeate the attempts to reach an agreement on countries having permanent seats, especially in the light of the variable political circumstances and political characteristics in each region.

With regard to the criteria for selecting the States that are qualified to have permanent seats, and taking into account Egypt's commitment with what is going to be reached within the framework of the OAU as regards rotation, there are certain criteria that we propose be taken into account. They include present and future economic development, historic weight, geographical location, population, as well as the country's degree of effectiveness in the role it plays in the building and preservation of peace and security regionally and internationally, including the ability to contribute to peacekeeping operations. Also included in these criteria are the State's efforts to preserve the interests of the region to which it belongs.

Clearly, there is no doubt that this issue is extremely sensitive and complex — a matter which impels me to remind you of what is called the "fall-back position" of the Non-Aligned Countries — as presented in the 1995 paper. As I mentioned moments ago, this position is, in case of lack of agreement on new membership categories, that it would be better for all of us to work for an increase only in the non-permanent member seats.

Foreign Minister Amre Moussa of Egypt has previously referred more than once in this Assembly to the fact that the regional and international contributions of Egypt within the African, Arab and Islamic frameworks, as well as those of the Middle East and among the developing countries, and within the

framework of the emerging economies, would qualify it to shoulder increasing responsibilities in a new, expanded and balanced Security Council in its representation of the different regions of the world. However, Egypt remains totally committed to the African consensus in this respect, and to the positions of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As regards the development of the working methods of the Security Council, the delegation of Egypt wishes to delve into the voting system in the Council. It is a system that has so far not been destined to be complete, as a result of the lack of agreement on criteria to distinguish between substantive and procedural matters before the Council.

Although more than a half a century has elapsed since the establishment of the Security Council, its rules of procedure are still provisional. As we all know, the historical background of this dates back to a memorandum presented during the San Francisco Conference on 8 June 1945, which is mandatory only for the permanent Member States. The five States have, in effect, failed to include in the Charter or in the rules of procedure a text that reflects the elastic style advocated by that memorandum. This means that we do not now have a clear, open system agreed upon by the United Nations Members and the Security Council members concerning the exercise of the right of veto, and the scope of that usage.

In this respect, Egypt submitted a working paper on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1996 that clearly expresses the position of the Non-Aligned Countries regarding the right of veto. The paper stated, that the time has come for the General Assembly to conduct a study on the scope of the right of veto in a comprehensive and integrated manner, with a view to limiting and rationalizing the scope of its use, especially in view of the fact that we see daily unacceptable manifestations of abuse of the veto.

Egypt also posed a clear question to the Bureau of the Working Group in order to provide the Member States with the legal foundation of the present "actual practice" of the exercise of the veto. The question deals with the practice whereby its scope extends indefinitely without any prior agreement by United Nations Members either through an article in the Charter or through an article in the Security Council's rules of procedure. I conclude from the aforementioned that the actual practice of the exercise of the right of veto in the Security Council has no legal foundation and should be reviewed in order to identify clear-cut controls.

The Non-Aligned Movement has also presented a working paper concerning ways of improving the procedures of the Council. The Working Group started to debate it, but the negotiations on it have not been completed, as they were overwhelmed by the discussions regarding what is called a "framework resolution".

Egypt's position is based on the following. First, the countries that took part in crystallizing this draft resolution had sought to have the Assembly adopt a resolution before general agreement between the countries and the regional groups, and without the majority required by the Charter for any amendment to it, in accordance with its Article 108. Secondly, to impose a time-frame to resolve the question of increasing the membership of the Security Council contravenes one of the important points in the New Delhi Declaration of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. Thirdly, the framework resolution gives only one permanent seat for Africa, although the African Group's position, adopted at the Harare summit, calls for two permanent seats for Africa. Finally, the draft resolution totally ignores the request by the Arab Group to have one permanent seat by rotation among the Arab States, whether Asian or African.

The informal consultations on the framework resolution have led to a consensus among many States of varying tendencies and inclinations on the need to prevent rushing to adopt a resolution which does not enjoy general agreement. Since we have not so far reached a precise definition of a general agreement, and since the adoption of the General Assembly resolution upon which the Working Group was established, the minimum for such general agreement is reflected in what draft resolution L.7 has stipulated. It stipulates that a two-thirds majority of the Member States in the General Assembly is essential for the adoption of any resolution which provides for any amendment to the United Nations Charter.

In conclusion, I wish to mention that Egypt looks forward to the resumption of the work of the Working Group in mid-January 1998 to reach general agreement acceptable to all on this vital issue.

Mr. Ayewah (Nigeria): In contributing to this continuing debate on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other related matters, the Nigerian delegation would like to express its appreciation to the former President of the General Assembly, Ambassador

Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for his courage and clear-sightedness and to the Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand and Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland, for their diligence in seeking to advance the process and to reach meaningful conclusions. Of course, we welcome their reappointment.

The deliberations in the Working Group have revealed the complexity of the subject matter, the unwillingness of some Member States to expand and reform the Council and the challenge facing the United Nations in terms of its restructure and reform. The report of the Working Group is now before us in document A/51/47 of 8 August 1997.

A cursory look at the report would tend to convey the impression of a lacklustre performance on the part of the Working Group, or an absence of substance in its conclusions after almost four years of deliberations. But we must hasten to add — and this is the reality of the situation — that the paucity of the report is in no way a reflection of the work done or the progress recorded by the Working Group in the course of its previous sessions. For one thing, there is now general acceptance of the need to reform the Council in order to make it more responsive, equitably representative and more legitimate when it acts on behalf of the entire membership of the world body. What has been contentious, however, is the modality of the reform. In this regard, Nigeria believes that as a result of the bold and far-reaching initiatives of Ambassador Razali, and the one-on-one consultations conducted by the co-Vice-Chairmen at the beginning of this year, the Working Group has now been able to reorient the discussions more concretely towards achieving a comprehensive and equitable reform of the Security Council.

The Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of African Unity have, through their respective declarations, underlined the importance of the reform and expansion of the Council, taking into account the interests of developing countries. Nigeria believes that that interest can best be served only by having developing countries represented in the permanent membership category in the Security Council. To do otherwise, or to shy away from the imperative of doing this, would be to perpetuate an arrangement which has been overwhelmingly acknowledged as being anachronistic, out of date and out of tune with present-day realities. In this regard, we welcome the findings of the co-Vice-Chairmen during their one-on-one consultations with Member States, when they concluded, *inter alia*, that there is overwhelming support for an increase in both categories of Security Council membership, including developing country representation.

Building on those findings, and on the basis of our work of the three previous years, Ambassador Razali, in his capacity as Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group, came up with a comprehensive package framework of proposals for moving the process forward. The strength of those proposals, in our view, was reflected in the fact that no one delegation was entirely happy with all its provisions. The package, which was conceived and put together from a pragmatic stance, sought to reach accommodation with the differing perspectives of Member States. The challenge before us is really not to reinvent the wheel, but to continue to work on the basis of the spirit of compromise and an underlying political will and disposition to make progress during the course of the fifty-second session, leading ultimately to a fair and credible decision on the matter.

With regard to the working methods of the Council, there has been a great convergence of views on the need for continued improvement, particularly in terms of transparency and greater democratization in the Council's decision-making procedures. The Non-Aligned Movement negotiating paper on cluster II issues was the basis of extensive and productive deliberation during the session. We recommend that the General Assembly takes note of this.

On the question of the veto, the Non-Aligned Movement has offered a view in a paper which has received overwhelming support. The conclusions reached in that paper deserve the serious consideration of all Member States and the particular consideration of the current permanent members of the Security Council. In this regard, we must reiterate the non-discriminatory attribution of the veto to all permanent members. Permanent membership confers a privileged status, which in turn — this is most important — implies cognate responsibilities and obligations. As a starting point, the current permanent members must show willingness not to regard the veto or the exercise of it as an exclusive privilege which must be guarded jealously and used at whim to override the legitimate concerns of the majority of Member States.

On the composition and size of the Council, my delegation continues to assert that the current anomaly of lack of African representation in the permanent membership category deserves urgent correction, as not only does the continent have the largest number of United Nations Member States, but these States collectively constitute almost one third of the United Nations membership. In this context, the collective demand of

Africa to have two-seat representation in the permanent membership category simply cannot be ignored. The demand is legitimate, credible and made with a full sense of responsibility and relevance to the international system. It deserves the full support of all Member States. We would, however, wish to clarify that the modalities of that representation should be left to Africa.

On the question of an "imposed time-frame" as it relates to the need to reach "general agreement", my delegation has recently become concerned at the misuse to which these ideas have been put or are being put. While it is important that we do not indulge in interminable debates on the question, we must not rush into reaching an agreement. There is wisdom in making haste slowly. We know that "general agreement" does not necessarily mean unanimity, and we dare say not even consensus. It only means that we should reach a decision that the majority of Member States can live with. Unfortunately, there is a trend to hijack these noble ideas and use them to block and frustrate the process in the hope of eventually scuttling the entire process. We cannot accept the status quo or give those States that are opposed to reform or expansion of the Council a justification to persevere with their negative stance, or give those already over-represented in the Council a reason to be over-confident, self-assured or unwilling to accept the need for reform of the Council.

Finally, let me say that substantial work has been done in terms of the preparatory processes of the reform, but we have not yet reached the stage of voting on any package. For example, we are yet to undertake actual negotiations among regional groups and within the Working Group on numbers and the modalities of representation.

At the same time, we strongly believe that the proposals of the former President have advanced the process somewhat and do provide a plausible framework enabling us to start concrete negotiations that could lead to a general agreement. One thing is clear, however, and bears repeating to avoid any doubt: Africa's demand for two permanent seats, with all the attributes, must remain basic to any expansion of the Council.

We therefore charge the Open-ended Working Group during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, under your distinguished chairmanship, Mr. President, to redouble its efforts in all objectivity and equity in order to come up with concrete proposals that would address, in a holistic manner and not piecemeal, all the issues regarding the increase in permanent and non-permanent membership, working methods of the Council, and the equitable geographical distribution of seats in the Council.

In concluding, let me reiterate that it is possible to reform and restructure the Security Council. Member States desire it and the international community expects it. And you have demonstrated, Mr. President, that you intend to move the process forward, build consensus and reach a fair and credible conclusion. We wish you well in this compelling duty of Security Council reform.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): Following the precepts of men of wisdom from the past, I will seek to make my statement short, trying to compress as much as possible into a few words.

The reform of the Security Council is one of the most important issues in the context of the United Nations reforms. It is also probably the most sensitive issue, which has not only political meaning but also a tangible emotional dimension, as today's debate has already shown.

The necessity of Security Council reform has been repeatedly highlighted by Member States. In fact, today we have every reason and good grounds to believe that there is a general understanding that the Security Council should be expanded and its working methods should be improved.

The Security Council needs to attain a more representative character, bigger support among the Member States and a higher level of legitimacy. This should strengthen its effectiveness, thus contributing to the authority of the United Nations in general.

The position of Ukraine on this issue has been presented in a comprehensive manner at all previous sessions of the General Assembly and was also mentioned as a position paper in the report of the Working Group dealing with this matter [A/51/47]. However, I would like to repeat the general principles on which, as we see it, the enlargement of the Security Council should be based.

First, all regional groups, including the Eastern European Group, should enlarge their representation in the Security Council. Secondly, the enlargement should not negatively affect the efficiency of the work of the Council. Thirdly, the process of enlargement should not be put within strict time limits, although a decision on

this issue should preferably be adopted in the nearest possible future.

I wish to take this opportunity to place special emphasis on Ukraine's conviction that the enlargement of this organ should be effected through the proportional increased representation of all regional groups, reflecting the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations since the Security Council reform in 1965.

In this regard, Ukraine supports the increased representation in the Security Council of the developing countries from Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. At the same time, I would like to stress the particular importance for the Eastern European region to have an additional non-permanent seat in the reformed Security Council.

Let me refer to one concrete example which could testify to the legitimacy of the interests of the Eastern European regional group. In 1986, Ukraine presented — and still maintains — its candidature for the non-permanent seat for the term 2000-2001. Taking into account the number of Member States in our regional group at that time, the period since 1984-1985, when Ukraine last served on the Security Council, could have permitted all the other States of Eastern Europe to be elected to this important organ of the United Nations. But the fact that the membership of this regional group has doubled marked the beginning of tough competition for the only non-permanent seat allocated to it. This competition restricts the countries' prospects to realize their legitimate aspirations to make their contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. That is the main reason why Ukraine strongly advocates the need for an additional seat for the Eastern European Group in the reformed Security Council.

The question of the veto has become central to the efforts of Member States to improve the decision-making mechanism of the Security Council. Any genuine reform of the Security Council must address the question of the veto. We, in principle, share the view that in the present political realities the existence of the institution of the veto is obsolete. We should be focusing on how to limit its use, not on how to proliferate it.

In this connection, in the framework of the Working Group on the reform of the Security Council, our delegation voiced its support of the idea of the so-called "diluted veto", as well as of the restricted application of the veto by the Security Council's permanent members. Such modifications, in our opinion, may limit the number of occasions when the permanent members can apply the veto only in their own national interests, to the detriment of the interests of the international community as a whole. While standing firmly in favour of its restricted application, Ukraine understands that only the permanent members themselves can modify the right of veto.

The dual goal of the reform of the Security Council is not only to make it more representative and balanced, but also to make its work more effective and transparent. Improvement of the working methods is an important aspect of the reform process, with far-reaching consequences, and Ukraine welcomes the progress achieved in this area.

But improvements in methods of work cannot in themselves be called "reform". Since it is obvious that, as of now, we cannot find consensus on the proposals on Security Council reform presented so far, it is the strong wish of this delegation that the work of the Open-ended Working Group — which, as you, Mr. President, announced earlier, might resume in the second half of January 1998 — achieves the fulfilment of its mandate under your chairmanship. We wish you every success in this endeavour.

Mr. Salander (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and my own country, Sweden.

I will also make some comments based on Sweden's present experience as a member of the Security Council. This has given us a particular reason for reflection, both on the role of the Council in the international system, and on its internal functioning. It has reinforced our common conviction that a truly effective Security Council requires comprehensive reform.

Effectiveness means that the Council is able to agree on early and appropriate action throughout the spectrum of conflict resolution, from early warning, fact-finding and prevention to launching new peacekeeping operations and, if need be, taking Chapter VII action.

Effectiveness also means that the decisions of the Security Council are respected and carried out. Reform should ensure that a broad range of international concerns are brought to the attention of the Security Council. It should ensure that important global and regional perspectives are included in the Council's decision-making process, and that States take responsibility for its results. It should ensure that the

Security Council acts — and is seen as acting — on behalf of all Members of the United Nations.

Comprehensive Security Council reform therefore has to deal with the content of Council decisions, with its working methods and with its size and composition.

Non-permanent members are a crucial part of the Security Council membership. They ensure representativeness, not only geographically, but between different experiences and viewpoints, and between big and small, powerful and less powerful Member States. Non-permanent members can be expected, as a matter of immediate self-interest, to give priority to openness, transparency and broad consultations with non-Council members. And by having to stand for election to the Council, non-permanent members provide a particular measure of accountability. Sweden thus made a point of explaining in advance its overall political intentions as a Council member.

It is essential that a substantial number of the additional seats in an enlarged Security Council be set aside for elected non-permanent members. Elected members should also continue to constitute a clear majority in the Council.

Regional groups should be free to agree on their own rotation methods for non-permanent seats. To ensure maximum rotation, the provision whereby retiring members are not immediately re-elected should be retained.

The combination of non-permanent and permanent members provides broad representativeness as well as continuity to the work of the Security Council.

The Nordic countries are therefore in favour of an increase in the number of permanent members of the Council. We share what seems to be a clear majority view that it is important to reflect major changes in the international system in this way. It also seems clear that there is strong support for Germany and Japan as new permanent members, together with developing country Member States from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The members of the Security Council, permanent and non-permanent, share a global responsibility. At the same time, all of them bring valuable regional knowledge and experience to the Council. Balance and interaction between these global and regional factors is a key element in the Council's work. It should also be a major factor in the process of enlargement.

It should be our goal that a global decision on Security Council enlargement — and it must be a global decision — take into account regional views as much as possible. The decision in the Harare Declaration of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to apply a method of rotation is indeed significant. We should respect this regional position on rotation, and try to devise a way of accommodating it within an overall solution. Other regions may of course take a different approach, which should be equally respected.

We should also recognize that the international scene will continue to evolve. In the next 50 years we will in all likelihood see more — rather than less — change than in the previous half century. This underscores the need for flexibility and a mechanism to review and revise the composition of the Security Council. The Nordic countries are strongly in favour of an agreement to carry out such a review, perhaps 10 or 20 years after an enlargement. And we believe that during such a review the Member States must have a real opportunity not only to discuss, but to decide and amend.

The power of veto is a unique aspect of decision-making in the Security Council. Paradoxically, it both paralysed and held together the Organization during the long period of the cold war. But with the end of the cold war the veto has become rare, albeit not yet extinct, in the practice of the Council. The new international situation has created new opportunities for unity in the Security Council and for a truly cooperative approach to its decision-making. The Council has moved a considerable way in that direction. As the Security Council hopefully continues on this course gradually to curtail the use of the veto, it should also become less difficult to find a solution to the problems it poses to the negotiations on Security Council reform.

The Nordic countries would want to see concerted action to reduce the role of the veto. The permanent members should be strongly encouraged to minimize their use of the veto. They should now be able to do what the General Assembly already requested 50 years ago, namely, agree among themselves on limiting the number of situations in which the veto may be used, and on which issues should be defined as procedural ones. And, as part of the Charter amendments in connection with an enlargement of the Council, the possibility of a veto could perhaps be excluded from a number of specific situations.

Most countries ready to accept the responsibilities of permanent Council membership have also expressed the wish to acquire the corresponding rights, including the veto. The difficult task of finding a way of combining this aspiration with the requirements of efficient decision-making in the Security Council still lies ahead.

It would not be an ideal option to have a Security Council in which perhaps 10 countries were endowed with veto powers as presently constituted. The Council could again become paralysed on a number of issues. And even if that were not to occur, such a situation could marginalize the non-permanent members of the Council.

The Nordic countries have, all along, devoted particular attention to efforts to make the Council more open and transparent, and to encourage broad consultations with non-members, not least troop-contributing countries. These efforts have been vigorously pursued by Sweden as a member of the Security Council.

Sweden actively promoted the decision to revise the format of Security Council reports to the General Assembly. Following that decision, Sweden was, as president of the Council for July, the first to produce a written monthly assessment of the work of the Security Council. As Council president, Sweden worked together with the Secretariat to improve the format of troop-contributor meetings. And both as president and member Sweden has tried to do its part in seeing that non-members are fully briefed on all aspects of Council work, including the informal consultations.

These and other so-called cluster II issues are an important and integral part of today's agenda item and of the mandate of the General Assembly Working Group. Discussions and proposals from the Working Group have very clearly influenced the last few years' tendency towards a more open Security Council. Progress has been made, but more needs to be done. The Security Council should continue to improve its practice with respect, for example, to regular information to non-members, open debates, the inclusion of affected non-members in its discussions, troop-contributor meetings, and reporting to the General Assembly.

Openness, transparency and consultation are to a large degree a matter of improving the practice and the culture of the Council. This could also be reflected in rules of procedure, provided that flexibility is left for further development.

But while the means to achieve openness, transparency and consultation may vary over time, the underlying principle is surely of permanent and major importance. As such, it should merit recognition. If a revision of the Charter is undertaken, it could therefore — as the Nordic countries proposed a few years ago — be worthwhile to include a provision, for example in Article 24, that the Security Council shall inform and consult all interested Member States on its work.

We have four years of intensive deliberations behind us. This year, the President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, Ambassador Razali, and the Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group took important and bold steps, which have helped to move us forward.

Lately, great strides have been made to advance other essential aspects of United Nations reform. It is now imperative to finalize negotiations on the Secretary-General's reform proposals. Results in different reform areas should no doubt be mutually reinforcing, but linkages that will slow down or endanger the reform negotiations must be avoided.

When the Working Group is convened again in January next year, it must enter into a more result-oriented phase in its deliberations. In order to achieve this, the Working Group must apply flexibility to its working methods. The intensive deliberations held in the past four years should offer a good basis for more focused discussions and actual negotiations. The momentum gained in previous sessions should be utilized to its fullest extent now. We must also have the courage to tackle the difficult issues, like the size of the enlarged Security Council and the question of the veto. Decisions will be difficult, but they cannot be avoided endlessly.

Negotiations on Security Council reform need to be pursued with urgency, responsibility and flexibility. Our goal must be to find a solution which strengthens the Security Council and enjoys the general agreement of Member States.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): Our debate on this important item takes place as the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform is gearing up once again to continue its deliberations on this subject of such vital importance to the entire international community.

Allow me to begin with a tribute to the wisdom and leadership with which you, Mr. President, are handling

this important question under your presidency. I would like to assure you of Pakistan's full support in your work and pledge that we will continue to participate actively in the work of the Working Group next year.

As we all know, the Working Group was established in 1993 by resolution 48/26, and was mandated to reach general agreement on all aspects of the question of increase in the membership of the Security Council, and other matters related to the Security Council. Although the Working Group has been deliberating intensively for four years now, important differences still exist on many issues. If the reports of the Working Group are closely examined, one finds that little progress has been achieved so far. It is therefore useful briefly to recapitulate the main findings of the 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997 reports of the Working Group, which are as follows.

The 1994 report stated that although the debate was substantive and constructive, clarifying the positions of Member States, no conclusions were drawn.

The 1995 report stated that discussions also showed that important differences continued to exist on key issues before the Open-ended Working Group, and therefore further in-depth consideration of those issues was still required.

The 1996 report stated that a convergence of views had emerged on a number of issues, but important differences still existed on many others. It also stated that, first, both support and objections were expressed with regard to an increase in the permanent members; secondly, the proposal that in case of no agreement on the increase of other categories of membership, expansion should take place only, for the time being, in the non-permanent category had received wide support; thirdly, the proposals to limit the scope and use of the veto were widely supported in the course of the discussions; and, fourthly, enlargement of the Security Council will necessitate amendments to the Charter.

The 1997 report was a procedural report containing no analysis of the deliberations of the Working Group during the year. The decision to draft a procedural report was arrived at in view of the highly divisive debate in the Working Group, and it was feared by some that it would highlight more differences than convergences of views. It was, therefore, a step backwards compared to the earlier report of 1996.

In 1997, we witnessed some most unusual procedures introduced in the Working Group. These included the "confessional meetings" conducted by the two Co-Vice-Chairmen from January to March 1997, the so-called "complete picture" presented by the then President of the General Assembly in his capacity as the Chairman of the Working Group on 20 March 1997 and the presentation of the distillation of views by the co-Vice-Chairmen in May 1997. All these three initiatives were taken without any mandate from the Working Group and, in the opinion of many of us, lacked transparency and utility.

The so-called confessional meetings were apparently conducted in an attempt ostensibly to nullify the main findings of the 1996 report of the Working Group, agreed upon by consensus just three months earlier in September 1996. This was confirmed when the co-Vice-Chairmen in their report of 10 March 1997 stated:

> "those who have actively spoken in the Open-ended Working Group constitute only about 30 per cent of the full membership of the United Nations. The Bureau felt that it had to reach out to those who had hardly spoken, both in the Open-ended Working Group and at the General Assembly, in order to hear their views. This overwhelming but silent majority constituted over 100 Member States." [*A/51/47, annex VII, para. 2*]

In the reference to this amorphous "silent majority", the implied suggestion was that the consensus report of the Working Group adopted just three months earlier did not enjoy wide support. Is it possible, one may ask, that the findings of the Working Group's report had to be nullified in order to pave the way for the former Chairman of the Working Group to present his so-called complete picture? It is notable that despite the fact that the co-Vice-Chairmen were asked to publish a summary of views expressed by each delegation during the "confessional" meetings for the sake of transparency, they have not done so to date.

Even while delegations had not yet recovered from the shock of these "confessionals", the then Chairman of the Working Group dropped another bombshell on 20 March 1997 by putting forward his own paper, dubbed by him as the "complete picture", and declaring it to be the "mainstream view". It is noteworthy that the three meaningful phrases — "the silent majority", "the complete picture" and the "mainstream view" — were all introduced within a short span of 10 days, in an obvious

attempt to gloss over the deep differences on core issues and to artificially push the process forward. As expected, the paper of the then Chairman came under even harsher criticism in the Working Group, as the elements in the paper did not correspond to the positions of the major groups, such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Allow me to highlight some of the anomalies in the controversial Chairman's paper.

First, while the NAM, comprising 113 countries, had proposed expansion of the Security Council from 15 to 26, the "complete picture" of the then Chairman claimed that the mainstream supported the lower figure of just 24.

Secondly, whereas the NAM had proposed in an expanded Security Council the allocation of one additional seat for the Eastern European States Group, four seats for the Asian Group, four seats for the African Group and two seats for the Latin American and Caribbean Group, the paper of the then Chairman stated that the mainstream supported the allocation of two permanent seats to industrialized States and one permanent seat each to developing States from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as one non-permanent seat each to the African Group, the Asian Group, the Eastern European States, and Latin American and Caribbean States. One can only wonder how the then Chairman came to the conclusion that the "2+3 formula" for permanent membership had "mainstream" support.

Thirdly, while the then Chairman's paper proposed that the General Assembly should take decisions on matters relating to the composition of the Security Council and the voting procedure, it only made recommendations on matters relating to the working methods of the Security Council, including the exercise of the veto right by the permanent members of the Security Council. Again, one wonders how this was the "mainstream view", when the NAM had demanded that the use of the veto should be limited to actions under Chapter VII of the Charter.

The most disturbing aspect of the then Chairman's vision, however, was the proposal to expand the Security Council in stages. In the first stage, it was envisaged that a framework resolution would be adopted by a simple majority; in the second stage, the new permanent members would be elected by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting; and in the third stage the Charter would be amended in accordance with its Article 108. The intention was clear, namely, to bulldoze the process forward; to use salami tactics, expanding the Security Council through a simple majority vote of the members of the General Assembly. Once again, this unusual concept of the phased approach, which was purported to have the support of the mainstream, had never been discussed in the Working Group.

As if this were not enough, we were treated to yet another surprise, when the co-Vice-Chairmen presented a so-called distillation of views of the delegations, which turned out to be no more than a rehash of the then Chairman's paper of 20 March 1997 with regard to issues relating to the composition of the Security Council.

As a result of these initiatives, the Working Group could not make any substantial progress during the year. A handful of countries then attempted to take the process out of the Working Group in order to finalize a framework resolution on the basis of the then Chairman's views, and then to put it forward directly in the General Assembly this year. The main objective behind this scheme was to circumvent the Working Group, whose mandate required reaching "general agreement".

It was against this backdrop that Pakistan and 21 other like-minded countries put forward their draft resolution A/52/L.7 of 22 October 1997. This procedural draft resolution was intended neither to derail nor to delay the process of Security Council reform, as has been alleged by some. Its main objective was to ensure that any decision on Security Council reform should be as broadly supported as possible by the members of the General Assembly, so that we do not repeat the mistake of 1945, when the view of a number of countries was ignored and no consensus was reached on permanent membership and the veto.

I would like to point out here that the language of operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution, which stresses the need to comply faithfully with the provisions of Article 108 of the Charter of the United Nations with respect to any resolution with Charter amendment implications, has been directly lifted from paragraph 14 of the consensus Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Communiqué of 25 September 1997.

Not surprisingly, the proponents and beneficiaries of the quick fix, and those hanging on to their coat-tails, have been disturbed over the submission of this procedural draft resolution. We were shocked, however, at the strong language used by some of them in their communications against the draft resolution. We were also surprised over the arm-twisting techniques employed

subsequently by some of them to dissuade Member States from supporting the draft resolution.

Recently, one of the aspirants circulated amendments to our draft resolution. One of the amendments proposed seeks to replace operative paragraph 2 with the language of Article 18, paragraph 2, of the Charter:

> "Decisions of the General Assembly on important questions shall be made by a two-thirds majority of the Members present and voting."

This proposed amendment vindicates our point of view that the supporters of the framework draft resolution had indeed been attempting to ignore the majority view in order to secure a seat for themselves in the Security Council.

It is also noteworthy that the proposed amendment quotes Article 18, paragraph 2, of the Charter only partially and ignores the subsequent elaboration in the same Article that important questions shall include, among others, the election of the non-permanent members of the Security Council. Is it not ironic that countries which practise democracy at home and advocate it abroad should be seeking to undermine this very principle while reforming an important organ of the United Nations?

In our view, three provisions of the United Nations Charter relate to decision-making: Article 18, paragraph 2, requires that decisions on important questions — that is, those on the list of issues outlined in the Article — be made by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting; Article 18, paragraph 3, relates to decisions on other questions being decided by a majority of the members present and voting; and Article 108 outlines the procedure on questions requiring Charter amendment. The reform of the Security Council, which would require Charter amendment, obviously falls under the last category. Article 108 therefore ensures that the majority view is not ignored in important matters requiring Charter amendments.

The situation in which we find ourselves today arises out of fundamental differences on the very genesis of the question of how the Security Council should be reformed. Some feel that the objective should be to simply add a couple of members to the permanent membership of the Security Council. Others want the reconsideration of all issues relating to the reform of the Security Council, such as the review of the very concept of permanent membership; whether some countries continue to deserve to be permanent members in view of their dwindling fortunes over the last 50 years; the need to reform the Security Council on the principles of equitable geographical distribution and sovereign equality of States; the need to inject greater transparency into the working methods of the Security Council; and the need to curtail the use of the veto, limiting it to actions under Chapter VII of the Charter. So far, the main thrust has come from the first group of countries which, despite being in a distinct minority, want only a few of their chosen allies to be seated in the aristocratic and exclusive permanent-membership club, even if this brushes aside and ignores the views and interests of the vast majority of the members of the General Assembly.

We must now be mindful that we do not repeat the mistake of 1945, when a few countries decided how the Security Council should be structured and how the permanent members should enjoy the veto. There was no consensus on the issue in 1945, and there is none today.

While we agree that the Security Council needs to be reformed to reflect some of the shifts and changes in the world over the past decades, we see no justification in allocating yet another seat to a single, coordinated European Union, which already occupies two of the five permanent seats in the Security Council.

If deep differences continue to exist on the subject, it is also because two important principles have been brushed aside by the few who are seeking to impose their will on the many. The first of these principles is the respect for regional acceptability — I repeat, the respect for regional acceptability — for representation on the Security Council. It is this principle which is applied in the gentleman's agreement on the allocation of regional seats in the elected category of non-permanent members of the Security Council. Regional acceptability becomes even more important in case permanent membership has to be reformed. The second principle is that of the strict fulfilment on the part of any aspirant, whether to permanent or non-permanent membership, of the obligations resulting from the purposes and principles of the Charter and an equally strict compliance with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations over the years. The question of crowning countries which have persistently demonstrated obvious non-compliance with United Nations resolutions does not arise.

The negotiations in the Open-ended Working Group over the last four years show that deep differences exist between delegations on the expansion of the permanent membership of the Security Council. The Working Group

will be resuming its work in mid-January next year. If we earnestly desire to move the process forward, then we will have to take into account the positions of the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Group, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Arab Group. If this cannot be done, then it would be prudent to focus on the doable — namely, to examine the Non-Aligned Movement fall-back position, that if there is no agreement on other categories of membership, expansion should take place only for the time being in the non-permanent category.

Pakistan, for its part, has consistently reiterated the importance it attaches to the reform of the United Nations. We recognize and fully share the general desire of Member States to strengthen the role of the Security Council and to review its composition in order to reflect the substantial increase in its membership. We also believe that the overall composition of the Security Council needs to be balanced in terms of representation.

We are against any enlargement of the permanent membership of the Security Council since this concept is against the principle of sovereign equality of States. We would not support an expansion which would merely serve to accommodate the interests of only a few countries, and, conversely, alienate the small and medium-sized countries, which constitute an overwhelming majority in the General Assembly. We will continue to oppose the creation of new centres of privilege and the aggravation of imbalances within the United Nations system, as these are anachronistic, anti-democratic and contrary to the principle of sovereign equality of States enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

As our Prime Minister emphasized in his address to the General Assembly in September this year,

> "More than mere lip service must be done to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, such as the sovereign equality of all its Members and equal rights for all nations, large or small ... The legitimization and enlargement of the privileged club of veto powers would deal a crippling body blow to the ability of the United Nations to carry out its responsibilities" [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 6th meeting].

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on the concern you have shown for the question of reform of the Security Council. The meetings that you have fostered are creating in the Assembly the atmosphere of confidence that is required to deal with this issue. We are convinced that your ongoing attention to this matter will help to guide these discussions, with a view to finding a solution that would meet with general agreement.

In the light of earlier debates, it appears to us that the main problem posed by the reform of the Council has basically two aspects. The first, relating to changes in its methods of work, is aimed at ensuring greater transparency and participation of the remaining Members of the Organization. Despite the existence of broad agreement on the need for change in its methods of work, if we go by daily practice within the Council, no progress has been made in this very important area. This is detrimental to the perceived legitimacy of decisions, detracts from the United Nations and creates the impression in parliaments and in public opinion that this Organization is not efficient.

The second aspect of the matter relates to the increase in the number of members of the Council. Here, the differences among countries are substantive ones, and for this reason these differences will not be overcome with just words or through procedural mechanisms. In our opinion, if there is one thing that the great majority of delegations do not wish and that public opinion would not tolerate, it is the creation today of a system that would forever leave them on the fringes of the most important organ — that entrusted with international peace and security. That would mean more discrimination, and this is really the core of the debate.

The expansion that some are promoting would lead precisely to what no one wishes to see: more discrimination. It is for that reason that this exercise is not making headway. This is because it is difficult to accept that the Council will improve and become more democratic merely through the addition of new permanent members. The discrimination that this implies creates insurmountable difficulties.

It should come as no surprise that in an international arena characterized by the triumph of democracy and by the overcoming of ideological conflicts, countries reject discrimination. As far as we can see, discrimination is not accepted by Asia; it is not accepted by Africa; it is not accepted by Europe; and it is certainly not accepted by Latin America and the Caribbean.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a region that gained independence and its place in history precisely

because of its opposition to discrimination and because it clearly upheld the principle of sovereign equality of all States. For these reasons, the Foreign Minister of Argentina, Guido di Tella, during his statement in the last general debate, ventured to suggest a flexible, non-exclusionary and democratic mechanism that would allow for access by all those who consider themselves qualified to serve on the Security Council. This mechanism is not a commodity; it is not a product. It is the reflection and the outcome of a philosophy that stems from the democratic core of Latin America and the Caribbean; and we should never ignore our own reality.

Furthermore, it seems that we are now in a phase in which, in order to advance, all regions of the globe should be thinking along those lines. We were quite struck by the statement made by the representative of Senegal this morning, when he explained the criteria adopted by his region. We found this persuasive because we are aware that that region, Africa, entered this Organization following heroic struggles against discrimination.

The Secretary-General has said that reform of the United Nations is a process. Reform of the Security Council too is a process, a phased process that will take place in the context of an international system that is evolving with difficulty.

The difficulties that will assuredly arise as we formulate flexible mechanisms will be far fewer than those that would arise if we tried to expand the system set up in 1945 on the basis of the aftermath of the greatest tragedy mankind has ever known. We must not follow that path.

We are preparing to continue the discussions with an open mind. We have the utmost confidence in the Vice-Chairmen, Ambassadors Breitenstein of Finland and Jayanama of Thailand. These four years have showed clearly that the approach to changing the Council promoted by one sector of the industrialized world is unconvincing. That is because it is discriminatory, because it is bound to a past that is now behind us, and because reform cannot be linked merely to capacity to pay.

Argentina is able to speak with humility and frankness because it has served on the Security Council on several occasions. It has sought through the efforts and sacrifices of its people to show its unswerving commitment to international peace and security and to the democratic values that are the essence of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Let me suggest that representatives might wish to read an interesting article by the well-known legal expert Louis Sohn that appeared in the most recent issue of *The American Journal of International Law*; it suggests solutions that seem to us to guard against the discrimination and divisions that the Assembly is now facing.

Mr. Owada (Japan): As I take the floor today, I am fully conscious of the fact that we Members of the United Nations are charged with one of the gravest responsibilities we have faced since the establishment of the Organization. The issue which brings us here today, the reform of the Security Council, is an issue which can determine the future of the world. It would be no exaggeration to say that our future will depend upon whether we succeed in creating a new United Nations, and a new Security Council, capable of effectively dealing with the issues that the present-day world is expected to face. In this sense, our intellectual integrity as well as our professional capability are being challenged. Naturally, all of us, as representatives of the nations that we respectively represent, cannot but be sensitive to the specific national interests of each of our countries. But what is involved in our joint exercise for reform efforts is much more than that. At stake is the whole problem of how successfully we can create a reinforced mechanism for ensuring peace and prosperity into the twenty-first century and beyond. Our joint responsibility in this sense is indeed grave.

The Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council has been in existence for more than four years. It has had extensive discussions on multifarious aspects of the wide-ranging issues involved. It would be accurate to say that, thanks to the collective efforts of its participating members, practically all the salient points relating to the issue of reform of the Security Council have been brought to the negotiating table. On the basis of progress thus far achieved, 1997 became the year in which to try, building on this progress, to focus our efforts on identifying a general framework of reform that could constitute the basis for an emerging general agreement. In the view of my delegation, there have been three major developments which have contributed to this progress this year.

First, the intensive interviews that the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group held with an overwhelming number of participants on the work of the

Working Group have revealed a clear direction in which in the minds of these members, Security Council reform should proceed. It was on the basis of these interviews that the Chairman of the Working Group decided to present, for the first time, a concrete, comprehensive package as a proposal of his own in the form of a conference room paper, document A/AC.247/1997/CRP.1, through the process of distillation of the views of this vast majority of United Nations Member States.

Secondly, the commitment to the expansion of the Security Council on the part of some important partners, including many permanent members of the Security Council, has been expressed in an explicit form, as was evidenced by the United States announcement of its new policy for an expansion that would include three permanent memberships for the developing regions. This new move has been conducive to a new environment in which to begin a concrete move towards serious negotiations on major outstanding issues, with a view to arriving at a conclusion.

Thirdly, various regional and other groupings have started to engage in serious efforts in search of a viable solution to many of the difficult outstanding issues, as evidenced at the Ministerial Meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held at New Delhi in April, and at the Organization of African Unity summit, held at Harare in June. It is noteworthy in particular that at those meetings a clear preference was expressed in favour of an expansion of the Security Council both in its permanent and its non-permanent categories of membership.

Through this process of crystallization of major points, the discussion in the Working Group has clearly brought to the surface a common recognition that reform to strengthen the United Nations and in particular the Security Council is a matter of urgent necessity and that the Security Council should be strengthened by enhancing its legitimacy and effectiveness, especially through an expansion of both its permanent and its non-permanent membership.

It is my firm conviction that we have now reached the stage where we should sit down at the negotiating table to work assiduously towards finding solutions to many of the outstanding issues that have been set forth and identified. We must now devote our energy to proceeding to the process of reconciling our differences and achieving a concrete package solution through political decision.

Let me now come to the question of how we should proceed from here. I would strongly suggest that, at this advanced stage of our consideration of the problem, it is important for the Working Group to engage in concrete negotiations on the major outstanding issues that have already been identified in the process of the work we have carried out thus far. We must exert efforts towards working out a framework for reform in a package through revitalized and intensified consultations in the Working Group, in parallel with consultations among all interested States. Needless to say, this package should include measures to improve the working methods of the Security Council and its decision-making process. Japan regards this aspect of the reform as being of great importance to our exercise. The achievement of this package will probably require our serious efforts in three major directions.

First, a political decision on the size of an expanded Security Council will be essential. It is important in this regard to ensure that the need for achieving equitable representation that realistically reflects the present international system be brought into harmonious balance with the need to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council.

Secondly, with regard to the methodology to select permanent members from the developing parts of the world, it is urgent that serious negotiations be held in ways that would reflect the particular characteristics of the various regions concerned, so that a viable solution to this complex problem can emerge as soon as possible.

Thirdly, there is the problem of the veto, which has to be dealt with in the context of a proposed expansion of the Security Council, in all seriousness and with all the sensitivity required. This is an issue that has a direct bearing upon the credibility and the viability of the United Nations system as a whole. In view of this intrinsic sensitivity of the issue, it is indispensable that we seek a solution with the utmost prudence and wisdom.

In view of the highly complex nature of Security Council reform, it goes without saying that a rash approach in seeking a hasty solution through a guillotine clause which would force a solution with an unrealistic and rigid time-frame, while the situation is not yet ripe for a political decision on major points, is not appropriate. At the same time, given the present advanced stage of our deliberations, where all the major issues have already been identified and are awaiting a political decision, we must get back to our original point

of departure and soberly reflect upon the basic question of why Security Council reform is so indispensable at this juncture, from the viewpoint of how best to maintain a newly emerging world's public order.

In the new environment of the post-cold-war era, world peace and stability can be maintained only through a system based on positive cooperation among nations. For this purpose, it is of crucial importance to see the United Nations peacemaking functions effectively strengthened. Enhancing the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Security Council is particularly essential in this regard. Japan, which has been a non-permanent Council member since the beginning of the year, is reminded of this point on a daily basis. The need for revitalizing the Security Council so that we may more effectively address regional conflicts erupting in Africa and elsewhere, and so that we may engage ourselves more vigorously in our pursuit of development in an environment of peace and stability, has never been so great as it is today. The creation of such an environment should be the most urgent common concern of all the countries of the world, and above all the countries of the developing world. Once we realize the urgency of this issue and the high expectations of the international community placed upon the United Nations in this regard, I am sure everyone will agree that our task of making the Security Council a more efficacious organ, capable of responding to this need, is the greatest and the most urgent problem confronting us within the Organization today. It is precisely on the basis of this reasoning that Japan feels so strongly about the urgency of Security Council reform.

Japan earnestly hopes and expects that all Member States, on the basis of this realization, will join hands in a cooperative effort to proceed expeditiously to serious negotiations and to an agreed framework for Security Council reform on the basis of a political decision. Japan believes that we have already reached the stage for such negotiations to make decisive progress in the course of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly under your able leadership, Mr. President.

I should like to close with a renewed pledge that Japan will spare no effort to that end.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon): Allow me at the outset to express our thanks and congratulations to you, Mr. President, on the way you conducted consultations on this very important agenda item. Allow me also to express our satisfaction at the reconfirmation of the two Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassador Breitenstein and Ambassador Jayanama, and to assure them of our full and active cooperation.

My delegation recognizes the need to keep the momentum alive, but we equally believe that a friendly and relaxed environment is necessary to allow us to achieve general agreement among Member States, as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 48/26 of 3 December 1993, and to enable us to reach results conducive to our major goal of a sustained reform of the Security Council.

Unfortunately, no general agreement exists at the moment on this important item. We recognize fully that Security Council reform is urgent, and we share the sentiments of others that this task should be addressed on a fast and steady basis. However, given the extreme importance of this issue, its serious implications for the future of world politics and the fundamental interest of every country and region, including, indeed, our own country and our sensitive region, we insist, as have other delegations, that our endeavours must not be hampered by an artificial time-frame. An outcome reached in that way would hinder the work of the United Nations, and in any event would be contrary to General Assembly resolution 48/26. We believe it is high time to adopt a new form of thinking with regard to this item, so as to enable us to reach a comprehensive solution to be worked on collectively with general agreement.

The document adopted in September by the Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is crucial to our debates. It reaffirms clearly that any reform of the Security Council will have to abide fully by the provisions of Article 108 of the Charter, thereby preventing any move calling for a stand to be taken on a framework draft resolution by simple majority. We reiterate the paramount importance and the centrality of Article 108 in any move regarding the reform. Any attempt to sidestep the two-thirds majority rule would be incompatible with the Charter and the subsequent mandate given to the General Assembly in resolution 48/26.

It has to be made clear that Article 108 means the agreement of two thirds of the United Nations membership, and not otherwise. Unfortunately, the conditions do not exist at this very moment for a broad convergence on a possible solution for Security Council reform, and the existence of so many contradicting statements during this debate speaks for itself. We hope that fruitful discussions in the resumed meetings of the

Open-ended Working Group, starting in January 1998, will bring about the indispensable general agreement which would open the door for the necessary decisions to be taken in this respect, in compliance with resolution 48/26.

Mr. Tello (Mexico), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Lebanon cannot but invest a strong interest in this reform of the Council, the Council being the main organ entrusted primarily with the role of maintaining international peace and security. We share with the other Arab States a keen interest and eagerness to play an active role and to participate effectively in the maintenance of international peace and security. This endeavour is a collective responsibility which calls for the active and persistent participation of all States.

It will be of paramount importance to apply, as far as possible, similar criteria — or a single criterion — to the election of the new permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council. In this respect, we believe that we should take full advantage of the method envisaged in paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 1991 (XVIII) of 17 December 1963. My delegation will elaborate further on this question during the debates in the Open-ended Working Group. It remains absolutely crucial to agree on the criteria as part of the package to be reached by general agreement.

The Arab paper, the African position adopted in Harare and the comments made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Mr. Ali Alatas, during the General Assembly debate last September reflect the spirit of paragraph 3 of resolution 1991 (XVIII).

We remain convinced that both reform and expansion of the Security Council should be considered as integral parts of a common package, taking into account the principle of the sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical distribution, as well as the need for transparency, accountability and democratization in the working methods and procedures of the Security Council, including its decision-making process.

My delegation shares the view that the reform process should be comprehensive and equitable and should tackle the issue of the increase of both permanent and non-permanent seats in the Council. We agree that representation in the Council should be reconsidered with a view to correcting, by enlarging the Council, the existing imbalance in its composition and to reflecting in a comprehensive manner the universal character of the world body.

In this respect, we remain committed to the directives given by the Cartagena summit of the Non-Aligned Countries and contained in the Movement's position papers adopted on 13 February 1995, 20 May 1996 and in the Non-Aligned Movement negotiating paper dated 11 March 1997. I would like to remind the Assembly that the Arab proposal presented on 23 May 1997 with the unanimous support of all Arab States and the full endorsement of the Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs requests the allocation to the Group of Arab States of at least two non-permanent seats on the Security Council and, in the event of an increase in the number of permanent Council seats, the allocation to the Group of a permanent seat with full privileges. This seat would rotate among the Arab States in accordance with the usual practice in the League of Arab States. The Group affirms that this request would be implemented in consultations with the African and Asian regional groups and with their understanding.

My delegation is looking forward to a fruitful discussion in the Open-ended Working Group in the hope of reaching general agreement on this most important item.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The General Assembly is once again discussing one of the important issues on its agenda for the reform of our international Organization. It is no coincidence that we are discussing the issue of reforming and expanding the Security Council today, after the adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution responding to the Secretary-General's plan for the reform of the United Nations. In this context, when discussing the issue of Security Council reform and enlargement, the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic is looking forward to applying the same standards and practice of democracy, transparency and respect for the positions of all States alluded to in the statements made by delegations when adopting the first part of the Secretary-General's plan.

Allow me to express the solid support of Syria's delegation for all the views, observations and ideas contained in the general statement delivered a short while ago by Ambassador Nabil Elaraby, the Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt, in his capacity as coordinator for the States members of the

Non-Aligned Movement on the issue of the reform of and the increase in the membership of the Security Council.

The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic welcomes the decision to reappoint the Bureau of the Open-ended Working Group. We also welcome the decision of the President of the General Assembly that the Working Group will resume its work at the beginning of next year. We are confident that we will benefit from the expertise and strenuous efforts of Ambassadors Breitenstein and Jayanama during the next phase of discussions, and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them on the trust that has been placed in them. At the same time, our delegation expresses our hope that the work of the Working Group will achieve results that will serve the interests of Member States in the context of democracy and transparency and the interests of general agreement, which has not yet been achieved.

We are separated by a period of more than 52 years from the time and circumstances in which the foundations of Security Council membership, both permanent and non-permanent, and of its mandate were laid down. The world has witnessed, especially in recent years, enormous developments which impel us to take steps and make decisions that will enable the United Nations system, which is responsible for the world's peace and security, to face up to its tasks and responsibilities.

I would like to mention that one of the most momentous developments witnessed by the United Nations lies in the vast increase in the membership, the practical effects of which have been reflected in all aspects of United Nations work, with the exception of the Security Council. Adopting a resolution that would satisfy the legitimate aspirations and the equitable representation of the developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and other regions, particularly the Arab region, as well as the Caribbean, is necessary and urgent. This is because it would bestow on the Council more legitimacy in its representation of the world's conscience in its field of competence, and more democracy in the decision-making process.

In this context, the delegation of Syria would like to re-emphasize the contents of document A/AC.247/1997/CRP.7, dated 9 July 1997, which was submitted to the Open-ended Working Group on behalf of the States Members of the League of Arab States. It deals with the necessity of granting, in any enlargement of the Security Council's permanent membership, a permanent seat to be occupied by the Arab States in Asia and Africa, in cooperation with the African and Asian Groups and on the basis of rotation, in line with the bases applied in the League of Arab States.

Furthermore, at least two non-permanent seats should be allocated to the Arab States because, as you could see and hear, the Security Council has issues of the Arab region before it every day. In this regard, we also support the stand taken by the Non-Aligned Movement that the expanded Council should have 26 members, in accordance with equitable geographical distribution. We would like to stress here that any increase in the membership that is done partially or selectively or hastily will not conform with the principles of democracy in international relations, of sovereign equality amongst States, or of equitable geographical distribution.

Restructuring the Security Council has commanded the attention of all States in the world. My delegation concurs with the positions of States that have said that this is an old debt we have to liquidate. The statements made in the context of this item have pointed up the keen interest of most of our States in arriving at a general agreement that would accord with the principle of democracy and transparency in modern international relations. This would respond to the varying national interests, when solutions to this significant and strategic matter are being formulated.

The expansion of the membership should not be subject to any restrictive time-frame. Despite the need to address this issue as a matter of urgency, we should not rush to dispose of it before arriving at formulas that reflect the interests and concerns of the Member States in a just manner which would also grant right where it is due. In this way, we can ensure arrival at a general and just agreement on such an important and sensitive issue. Here we would like to stress that the issue of expanding the Council membership and improving its working methods is an integral matter that should be considered as a comprehensive deal. It should take place with full transparency and in a manner that serves the credibility of the Council and the interests of the Member States.

On this basis, we are of the view that a faithful and precise commitment to the contents of Article 108 of the Charter of the United Nations is a duty of each and every State, in the context of respecting the Charter. Consequently, any attempt to circumvent the formula in the Charter would harm the Organization's credibility and its ability to deal with matters relating to its future and role.

Here, we would like to recall the Arab paper to which we referred at the beginning of this statement. We wish also to recall the African stand adopted at the Harare summit, as well as the declaration made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia during this session of the General Assembly on the principle of rotation in the permanent membership of the Security Council. This is because it is axiomatic that we should support these positions which find their roots in the principle contained in paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 1991 (XVIII) A of 17 December 1963, which addressed the principle of equitable distribution of non-permanent seats among the geographic regions in the Security Council.

Naturally, we will deal with the details of this matter in our contributions to the meetings of the Working Group. In this regard, we would like to reaffirm that any attempt to ignore the right of the Non-Aligned Movement to permanent seats in the Security Council cannot be acceptable to the Movement and thus cannot be in line with the principle of democracy and transparency.

While discussing the Security Council and its reform, we are duty-bound to refer to the need to accord special importance to its modus operandi and, consequently, to the need to elaborate controls and criteria to prevent the use of the veto in an arbitrary manner. This will foster the democracy and transparency which are necessary and basic to the Council's decision-making process, thus safeguarding the application of the Council's resolutions in a more objective and balanced manner, free from selectivity and double standards in the application of norms.

The delegation of Syria backs the stand expressed by the member States of the Non-Aligned Movement at the Cartagena summit, as well as the meetings of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Movement's countries in New Delhi and New York, on the need to minimize the use of the veto, with a view to abolishing it. The United Nations Charter should be amended so that the veto will be applicable, as a first step, only to issues coming under Chapter VII of the Charter, and in a manner free of double standards and selectivity.

Allow me here to stress the concept that there should be no recognition of any effect of the veto once the majority of the Council members have agreed to any resolution before the Council. In this respect, we wish to emphasize the need for the Council to surmount one of the fundamental issues that has put its credibility and legitimacy into question, that is, the application of double standards and selectivity in voting on its resolutions and in their implementation.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to express its deep gratitude to President Udovenko for his personal endeavours to have all interested parties reach a unified stand, to the effect that there be no decision on this highly significant item at this stage of General Assembly consideration, as there is need for more consultations and for intensifying such consultations. This, we believe, should pave the way for more discussion, dialogue and democratic consultations in the Open-ended Working Group on all matters to be discussed in the only appropriate forum, namely that Group, with a view to reaching later a democratic, balanced and fair resolution to be adopted by this Assembly.

The statements to which we listened this morning and this afternoon demonstrate the deep chasm existing between the positions of various States on the issue of Security Council enlargement and reform. The only way to eliminate that chasm is by reaching general agreement which reflects a general accord in the views of Member States of the United Nations, through continued dialogue and through democracy and transparency.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): I would like to begin my intervention by thanking President Udovenko, on behalf of my delegation, for having, through his good offices, helped to avoid a divisive confrontation on this issue. In light of that example of his work, I am certain that under his able Chairmanship, and with the assistance of the now veteran and seasoned Vice-Chairmen, Ambassadors Breitenstein of Finland and Jayanama of Thailand, the deliberations of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council will be in capable hands.

I doubt that there is a more important issue, or one that will have a more lasting and profound effect on the United Nations, than the subject of our deliberations in this Working Group. Whether or not this Organization evolves successfully so as to enable it to meet the manifold challenges of the next century will depend very much on our making the right decision about the reform of the Security Council. The other side of the coin is, unfortunately, also true. If we make a wrong choice through undue haste, we are likely to impair the growth of the United Nations and prevent it from evolving into

the effective and representative organization that we know we need.

It was this early realization and the enormity of the consequences of our actions which led to our highlighting, in General Assembly resolution 48/26, the importance of reaching general agreement on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. Anything less would not have sufficient legitimacy to reform the body whose decisions are binding on all Member States, even those not party to those decisions. Though we are all eager to make adjustments to this most vital part of our Organization, whose working methods and composition, we surely agree, no longer adequately reflect today's United Nations, we must not yield to haste and impatience.

(*spoke in English*)

The Canadian delegation has taken an active part in the debates of the Open-ended Working Group since its inception, with a single purpose in mind: to make the Security Council a more legitimate, efficient and effective body. To this end, we have sought to make the working methods of the Council more transparent and efficient, thereby making its decisions more legitimate and effective. We have been part of the majority of Member States calling for a better definition of the decision-making power of the Council, primarily by having the veto power apply only to Council decisions under Chapter VII of the Charter.

We have worked to convince others that this same vital legitimacy and effectiveness demand that the composition of the Council reflect both the increased membership of the Organization and the spirit and words of Article 23 of the Charter that

> "due regard [be] specially paid, in the first instance to the contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the Organization".

We have also made it clear that we consider that reforms can be implemented as they are agreed upon. There is no reason to delay implementing measures which, say, would bring greater transparency to the Council's working methods, just because general agreement on Council expansion has eluded us thus far.

This is the third session at which I have addressed the General Assembly on this agenda item, and we have made some progress in our deliberations. There is today a much greater awareness that the Security Council must ensure effective participation in decision-making by those members whose nationals, military or civilian, will find themselves in the crossfire of the conflicts over which the Council is deliberating. I believe this despite Canada's incongruous experience last year, when, having assumed a mandate from the Council to lead a multinational force in then-eastern Zaire, we found ourselves excluded from the Council's discussion of that crisis with representatives of non-governmental organizations.

I also believe we have made progress because I see the real effort a few individual Council members have made and are making to enhance the Council's transparency through various means, including the opening of Council meetings of an informative nature to non-members and the establishment of mechanisms such as groups of Friends of the Secretary-General. While much more can and will be done, these first constructive steps towards real transparency in the Council's method of work is a product of our ongoing deliberations on Security Council reform.

Such progress, albeit limited, on the other reform items has been understandably more difficult to demonstrate. This is especially true in the matter of Security Council expansion. What we Member States of the United Nations have to decide is nothing less than how we share among ourselves the responsibility and influence that come with making decisions that bind all Member States on matters of international peace and security. It is not surprising, therefore, that we have not yet come up with a definitive formula that has won the necessary general agreement.

Yet here too, I contend, more progress has been made than meets the eye. In the process of considering the wide range of proposals that have been put before the Open-ended Working Group, we have come a long way from our initially rigid concepts of Security Council expansion. We have begun to look at the entire range of contributions Member States make to the Organization as the foremost criterion for Council membership, much as was intended in Article 23 of the Charter.

Two of the more prominent proposals to come before the Open-ended Working Group have had the effect of blurring the concepts of permanent and non-permanent membership, namely, the proposal with which Ambassador Razali's name is most often mentioned, whereby the notion of rotation among regionally selected

States for a regional Council seat was introduced, and the Italian proposal, for which we had considerable sympathy, under which Member States would be elected from a group of countries which have made a significant contribution to the values and work of the Organization to periodic terms on the Council, thereby allowing them to rotate in and out of the Council on a regular and predictable basis.

I hope that in this light notions of impatience about the lack of more visible progress on Security Council reform are seen to be unfounded. Canada's objective has been and will continue to be to work towards our common goal, a general agreement as soon as possible. In pursuit of this objective, we will continue to oppose any proposal which does not and cannot attract general agreement, as to do otherwise would certainly lead to the deep divisions which would bring to a standstill all movement towards serious negotiations and could well impair the United Nations capacity to evolve in this vitally important dimension.

It is the concept of addition of new permanent members which seems to be creating the divisions that at this time we cannot bridge. If we find that general agreement continues to elude us, the straightforward non-permanent expansion of the Council, reflecting the new circumstances of the Organization, may indeed be our best course to follow.

Canada will oppose any proposal which has the effect of marginalizing countries like our own, not the biggest, the most populous, the most powerful or the rich and famous, but countries which, through their effort, commitment and contribution, are here to make the United Nations work, not only for themselves but also for the collective benefit of all the Member States. It is precisely because there are far more than two, three or five Member States in this category that I am confident that we will find a solution which will attract broad-based general agreement.

I can assure the President, and the Vice-Chairmen, of Canada's full and active participation once the work of the Group begins in January.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey): It has now been four years since the General Assembly decided to establish the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. In its resolution 48/26 of 3 December 1993, the General Assembly, recalling the responsibility conferred upon the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security and the potential challenges that lie ahead in the twenty-first century, recognized the need to review the composition of the Council and its working methods in view of the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations, especially of developing countries, as well as the changes in international relations. The fundamental objective of the reform of the Security Council has been to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness by rendering it more representative and democratic in its composition and transparent in its working methods. The General Assembly underlined in particular the importance of reaching general agreement in deciding the extent and modalities of the reform of the Security Council.

In the past four years, Member countries have extensively addressed several important aspects of the envisaged reform of the Council. Considerable progress has been achieved on certain issues, especially on those relating to the working methods of the Security Council. We have to concede, however, that reconciling the views of a great number of delegations on the issue of the expansion and composition of the membership of the Security Council has proved to be more difficult. After four years of intensive debate, important differences continue to exist among the membership with respect to the modalities of the enlargement.

As the Foreign Minister of Turkey stated in his address to the General Assembly two months ago:

> "Reform of the Security Council constitutes the most serious attempt in years to enhance the role and moral authority" [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 14th meeting, p. 16]

of that important organ of the United Nations. We have to ensure, therefore, that the reform of the Council, entailing both its enlargement and its working methods, corresponds to the justified expectations of the largest possible segment of the membership.

The reform efforts have to take into consideration the fundamental changes which have taken place on the world scene since the founding of the United Nations more than 50 years ago, as well as the evolving nature of the distribution of international power. We cannot presume that all these changes have been limited simply to the emergence of a very small number of new major Powers. We have to acknowledge the fact that a

significant and increasing number of countries have gained prominence and ever-widening economic and political influence in their respective regions. These emerging Powers, with a relatively higher capability and a greater willingness than others to contribute to regional and international peace and security and to the enhancement of international cooperation, should be given the opportunity to serve with more frequency on the Security Council.

This is the logic that has shaped from the outset the position of my Government on the issue of enlargement of the Security Council. The same reasoning has led us to oppose hasty and excessively pragmatic attempts to determine the outcome of the Council reform. Such an approach has not worked in the past. It is not expected to be feasible in the period ahead. Moves to cut short the due process of Council reform will not only compromise the success of the envisaged reform, but also seriously undermine the authority and credibility of the Security Council and the United Nations. In the face of such possible attempts, most delegations would feel compelled to resist any faits accomplis that would run counter to the collective will of the membership.

The present debate should serve to refresh our understanding of the parameters of the Security Council reform.

First, a general agreement among the membership will be required for any decision relating to Security Council reform. Article 108 of the Charter of the United Nations clearly stipulates that any amendment of the Charter shall require a two-thirds majority. The reform of the Security Council will require amendment of the relevant articles of the Charter. Therefore, not only the amendments to the Charter, but also any resolution with Charter-amendment implications will require the same qualified majority. Any interpretation to the contrary will not be acceptable to my delegation. Having said that, I should like to express the view that the "general agreement" which is referred to in General Assembly resolution 48/26 of 3 December 1993 goes well beyond the two-thirds majority stipulated by the Charter for Charter amendments, for the simple reason that it will not be possible to equate decisions relating to reforming the Security Council — which involve the representativeness, efficiency, effectiveness and transparency, in other words, the moral authority of the Council — to any other Charter amendment. Consequently, reform of the Council will require the support not only of the two thirds but of the vast majority of the membership. That is the way my delegation interprets resolution 48/26.

Secondly, the matter of Council reform is of such importance that it would not be reasonable to establish any time-frame for the process. In the light of the experience of our discussions in the Open-ended Working Group, my delegation is of the view that forcing ourselves prematurely to move into a negotiation phase, while the concept of an outcome remains elusive, would not serve our purpose, but would only add to our frustration.

Having made these points that we deem important, I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing our heightened expectations that forthcoming deliberations in the Working Group will enable the membership to gradually progress towards a general agreement and thus make the Security Council reform a reality.

The President returned to the Chair.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): I have listened very carefully to the statements made by the distinguished speakers before me on this very important subject we are considering today. They represent a wide spectrum of views and positions of the Member States, many of which have been stated in the past, either in this Assembly or in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform. What my delegation intends to do in this debate is not to reiterate, yet again, our national position on this issue — which has been very clearly articulated — but to indicate you, Sir, as Chairman of the Working Group, a sense of how, in our view, the issue ought to pursued in the coming year. I hope that our views will be pertinent to the discussion.

As a result of four years of deliberation there is a clear and unambiguous articulation of the common desire for a reform of the Council that would best reflect the realities of our times, and a belief that it is essential that the Council be enlarged to a size commensurate with the dramatic enlargement in the membership of the United Nations since its inception, which membership now stands at 185. There is also clear support for enlargement in both categories of the Council, namely the permanent and the non-permanent membership. What is still not clear is the size of the enlargement, how the new permanent members are to be selected, and whether or not they should enjoy the veto power.

With regard to the specific issue of the veto itself, while there is a clearly expressed desire on the part of the vast majority of the Member States that it be abolished, there has been no discernible shift in the

position of most of the permanent members who, it appears, do not wish to see any dilution of their rights and prerogatives, including the right of veto.

On the equally important issue of the working methods and transparency of the Security Council, the Working Group made significant progress at its last session. The efforts of the Bureau of the Working Group in consolidating various interests and positions of Member States on this issue, as set out in its Conference Room Paper 8, have been fruitful. The proposals contained in Part II of this Paper have been further refined during subsequent discussions. We hope that this will encourage Member States to make similar efforts with regard to other aspects of Security Council reform. At the same time, we note that the Council itself has begun to adopt some of these measures, albeit in an ad hoc manner, due in part to these deliberations. But much more remains to be done, and these measures should be further enhanced and institutionalized.

With regard to the overall package, Sir, your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, presented last year a package of proposals which he sincerely thought could command the support of a significant majority of the Member States, thereby amounting to an approximation of general agreement. He tabled his proposal in good faith and in all earnestness on the correct assumption that, on this highly politically sensitive issue of Security Council reform, there could never be a consensus agreement. The proposal, which energized the deliberations in the Working Group and provided a much-needed focus to the discussion, was welcomed by many Member States but was opposed by others who characterized it as being too bold and hasty. They wanted more time to discuss the various proposals that had been put on the table.

The challenge before us now at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly is how to utilize our time to pursue the matter further with a view to arriving at a decision either at the end of this session or in the very near future. Clearly, what is needed is to continue the efforts to ascertain whether or not there is a possibility of reaching general agreement on the key aspects of Council reform, particularly on the overall size of the Council enlargement, enlargement in the category of permanent members, the method of selection of the new permanent members and the issue of the veto, in particular whether it should be extended to the new permanent members and whether it should be modified or circumscribed — if it could not be done away altogether, as many of us would wish.

In looking forward to your leadership on this issue, Sir, my delegation will extend its fullest cooperation to you in your efforts to arrive at this elusive general agreement. We share the view that more time may perhaps be needed to allow for further elaboration of some of these ideas before an attempt is made to arrive at general agreement. To this end, my delegation will participate actively in the upcoming deliberations of the Working Group. We do not, however, believe in protracting the discussions longer than is practically necessary to reach such an agreement. We share the view that the main outlines of what could eventually constitute a general agreement on the reform of the Security Council are already there. What is required is further refinement and fine-tuning of some of the elements of the package which could conceivably be done during the upcoming deliberations of the Working Group. The question is whether there exists the political will on the part of Member States to carry the process forward during the next year, or, if necessary, a little longer and, more important, the political courage to make a final decision at the end of that period.

The challenge before you, Mr. President, as the Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group, is to ascertain whether there in fact exists the outline of a reform package that could be further developed in the coming year to meet the requirement of general agreement, or whether such an outline package has yet to emerge. In your efforts to ascertain this you will obviously need the cooperation of all Member States, particularly those that have articulated very strong national positions on specific aspects of the reform of the Security Council, as well as those of the so-called silent, but important, majority, which should be encouraged to be more forthcoming in expressing their views.

Clearly, if progress is to be achieved compromises will have to be made: otherwise, the current impasse will certainly continue. For instance, there is a clear need on the part of a number of Member States to move away from their current entrenched positions of supporting the enlargement of the Council to 20 or 21 members only, which is clearly unacceptable to an overwhelming number of Members of the Organization. There is also, *inter alia*, the necessity to clarify further the manner in which the new permanent members are to be selected, including, in particular, the concept of permanent regional rotation, which a number of countries, including mine, have promoted in previous sessions of the Working Group.

In this regard, if would be useful if in the upcoming sessions of the Working Group the African Group could be invited to elaborate on its idea of rotating permanent seats for Africa, which should be of interest and relevance to the other regions as well. Indeed, in promoting the concept of rotating permanent seats, the African Group should be commended for its commitment to the principles of greater transparency and democratization in the workings of the United Nations.

While we should all aim for the ideal, we should remind ourselves of the real, far from ideal world we are living in. If we are serious about the reform of the Council, as we all profess we are, then, while aiming for the ideal, we should apply our minds to the consideration of what could constitute a realistic and practical package of reform that could be supported by the required majority of Member States. In this regard, my delegation expresses the hope that Member States will adopt a more constructive approach to this important exercise and make the necessary compromises, as we all must in any serious negotiation, lest we lose this window of opportunity for change.

My delegation is firmly of the view that the attempt to arrive at a decision on a package for Security Council reform should be made here at the United Nations specifically through the mechanism of the Working Group, for which it was established in the first place. To allow for such a decision to be reached at the capitals of some Member States, however important or powerful they are, would be to abdicate our responsibility and mandate, thereby negating the very exercise of Council reform we are currently undertaking.

My delegation extends to you, Mr. President, our best wishes in carrying out your onerous responsibility as Chairman of the Working Group; we do so confident in the knowledge that you will be able to draw on your vast experience and creativity, and the stewardship skills that you marvelliously displayed in another reform exercise. In undertaking your responsibility, you will have the support and assistance of your two able co-Vice-Chairmen, the Permanent Representatives of Finland and Thailand, who were recently re-elected and to whom my delegation will extend its fullest cooperation.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): Security Council reform remains a key objective for the United States during this "reform Assembly". In order to make the United Nations more effective, we support an expansion of the Council which strengthens its capacity while safeguarding its decision-making efficiency and its effectiveness. This is the essential standard the United States will apply, and for this reason we support Japan and Germany as new permanent members. They would strongly enhance the Council's role at the centre of negotiations concerning threats to international peace and security.

The Council is a decision-making, executive body. Any change in its composition should reinforce its capacity to carry out its responsibilities. Therefore, we believe the world's developing regions should also be represented. On 17 July I announced that the United States would agree to accept as many as three new permanent members from developing countries. We remain open-minded as to whether these seats should be named, rotational or based on some other arrangement. That is for the Member States to decide.

Expansion of the Security Council to 20 or 21 seats would mean an increase by one third of its present size. We believe this number would preserve the decision-making capability of the Security Council in addressing issues of peace and security. We intend to work together with like-minded countries in the coming months to achieve a model of Council reform which will satisfy and, as needed, reconcile the several objectives of the Member States — in other words, stronger and broader representation, continued decision-making effectiveness and greater transparency.

The United States remains committed to further procedural changes to increase transparency within the context of an overall Council reform package, and we will continue to seek ways to broaden and regularize the opportunity for non-members of the Council, particularly troop contributors and others with a direct interest in the Council's deliberations, to contribute to its work. President Clinton told the General Assembly this fall that we are aiming at a framework resolution in the near term. Although we have not yet achieved that objective, we may be within striking distance of success.

Mr. President, we saw dramatic progress in Council reform during the course of this last General Assembly session, thanks in large measure to the work of your predecessor, Ambassador Razali, whose introduction of a draft resolution last March as the basis of negotiations galvanized the membership. We appreciate your leadership on this issue, and we look forward with enthusiasm to reinvigorating our efforts under your guidance and that of your co-Vice-Chairmen,

Ambassadors Breitenstein and Jayanama, when the Open-ended Working Group reconvenes next month.

Mr. García (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to begin by expressing our congratulations to Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand on their re-election as Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform.

My delegation fully supports the statement made by the Ambassador of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation would also like to reiterate its full support for the positions adopted by the Non-Aligned Movement during the course of the Security Council reform process, including those reflected in the final documents of the Cartagena summit, the New Delhi Ministerial Conference and the Ministerial meetings held during sessions of the General Assembly, particularly the one in New York on 25 September.

My country likewise fully backs the position documents approved by the Movement on 13 February 1995 and 20 May 1996, as well as the negotiation document of 11 March 1997. These documents were duly presented in the Working Group, and constitute a fundamental contribution to its deliberations.

Like many delegations that have spoken in the deliberations of the Working Group, we believe that the enlargement of the Security Council, reform in its working methods and the question of the veto are integral to the reform of the Council and should be addressed simultaneously. We believe and have stated on many occasions that the representation of the developing countries in the Council is genuinely inadequate. This situation should be corrected through the enlargement of that representation in the Council in such a way as to increase its credibility and adequately reflect the universal nature of that organ.

Reform and enlargement should respect the principles of the sovereign equality of States and equitable geographic representation. The Council should be expanded by at least 11 members, for a total number of no fewer than 26. It is obvious that any attempt to exclude the developing countries from an enlarged membership of the Council would be unacceptable. Any reform involving discrimination between developing and developed countries, or between the developed countries themselves, would be unacceptable.

The endeavour to restructure the Security Council should not be subject to an imposed timetable. No decision should be reached until a general agreement has been achieved on the point in question. If no agreement is reached on other membership categories after the efforts have been completed, enlargement should take place, for the time being, solely in the category of non-permanent membership.

As to the Security Council's decision-making process, my country has maintained an unswerving position of rejection of the veto as anti-democratic and contrary to the principle of the sovereign equality of States. The Charter should be amended so as to ensure that, as a first step, the veto can be applied solely to measures adopted pursuant to Chapter VII of the Charter. The ultimate goal must be the elimination of the veto.

It is vital to improve the working methods and decision-making process of the Security Council with a view to enhancing the transparency of its activities. The Working Group must reach agreements on specific and efficient measures based on the proposals contained in the negotiating paper on questions in cluster II submitted by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. The Security Council should accord those measures an institutional character. A commitment in this respect should be one component of the overall agreement on Security Council reform.

We would underscore the agreement, made at the most recent Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, that, given the importance of reaching general agreement, as reflected in General Assembly resolution 48/26, fuller discussions of various proposals submitted to the Working Group are called for. The negotiating process should be genuinely democratic and transparent and negotiations on all aspects should be held in every case, in open-ended forums.

In harmony with its obligations under the United Nations Charter, my delegation would like to stress that it endorses in its entirety the resolve of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to comply faithfully with the provisions of Article 108 of the Charter with respect to any resolution that might entail its amendment.

My delegation will continue to participate constructively in the deliberations of the Working Group

with a view to achieving an overall agreement that will allow the Security Council to be reformed in order to fulfil more effectively, efficiently and credibly the role that falls to it under the principles and purposes articulated in the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Last year, the Working Group on Security Council reform held numerous meetings and a large number of contributions and proposals were presented. However, our assessment of the outcome of these efforts cannot be entirely positive, since important differences continue to exist on fundamental issues in the reform process of the Security Council.

On the one hand, we have achieved significant progress in the discussion of measures conducive to improving the working methods and transparency of the Council's activities. On the other hand, the difficulty of finding a basis for wide support for an increase in the membership of the Council has become evident. It is particularly difficult to reconcile the interests of the Member States or a group of Member States with regard to the category of permanent members. In this context, we must consider, at this stage, limiting enlargement to the category of non-permanent member.

There is virtual unanimity among Member States that enhancing the working methods of the Security Council and the transparency of its work is a very important element of the reform process of the Council. We must be able to take advantage of the progress achieved this year in the discussion of these measures, including the proposals for their formalization, in order speedily to identify areas of consensus that will allow us to reach an agreement in this respect.

It will also be necessary to pursue the consideration of compromise formulas on the question of the reform of the decision-making process, including the veto, of the Security Council. Spain has presented a specific proposal on this matter. On the basis of the distinctions established in Article 27 of the Charter, we propose a differentiation of three types of Council decision: procedural matters, which would be adopted by an absolute majority; substantive matters not related to Chapter VII, which would require a special qualified majority, without the right of veto; and substantive matters related to Chapter VII, which would require the same special qualified majority, but with the possibility of exercising the right of veto.

It should not surprise us that we are having difficulty finding consensus in some parts of our discussions. On several occasions, Spain has stated that the reform of the Security Council is a very complex matter that should be addressed thoughtfully through a process of dialogue leading to a common understanding among all Member States. In a matter as important and consequential as this, we must avoid any temptation to set time limits on this process.

Conscious of the importance of the process of Security Council reform, Spain joined the group of countries that have sponsored draft resolution A/52/L.7, which has been submitted under this item. The draft resolution does not attempt to define specific modalities for a possible enlargement of the Council, but tries to preserve the requirements necessary, from a procedural perspective, to ensure that this reform achieves the necessary legitimacy.

In reaffirming that the reform of the Security Council must not be subject to an imposed time-frame and must be carried out on the basis of a general agreement, we are attempting not to hinder this process, but, on the contrary, to reflect the feeling of the great majority of the delegations in favour of providing, in a matter of such relevance, all the Member States with an opportunity to contribute fully to the deliberations, with a view to commanding the widest possible support for the reform of the Security Council.

Let me be clear. There are no delaying tactics or any hidden desire to maintain the current situation. It is an undeniable fact that the differences in the positions of Member States are now more acute and perceptible than in the past. We must reiterate that this reform, in view of its importance, requires general agreement.

At the same time, in our consideration of this issue, it is imperative that we conform strictly to the provisions and spirit of the Charter, particularly Article 108, given the extraordinary nature and implications of any decision that might be adopted with Charter amendment implications. To adopt a resolution that would define the general framework of Council enlargement, even without specifying some of the elements involved or including textual amendments to the Charter, would represent a decision with specific effects on the eventual nature of the reform and enlargement of the Council.

Can one seriously consider that a reform such as that upon which we are embarking -- a significant

revision of the Security Council, a decision that will have a critical effect on the future of this Organization — can be undertaken without the support of at least two thirds of all Member States? From a legal point of view, we would be violating the Charter; from a political point of view, it would be an absurdity. Thus, such a resolution should fully respect the procedure laid out in Article 108 of the Charter.

I wish to reiterate Spain's support for an increase in the membership of the Security Council that would enhance its representative character and make it more balanced and democratic, while maintaining at the same time a composition respectful of the requirements of efficiency and alacrity in its deliberations and decision-making processes. Spain considers that such an increase should allow for a more frequent presence in the Council of those States that contribute most significantly to the work of the Organization, in particular to the maintenance of international peace and security. These States could contribute even further to these purposes and could then participate more often in the deliberations and decision-making of the Council.

We find ourselves at a point that could be crucial to the future of our work on Security Council reform. We have not only the opportunity, but also the obligation to pursue this process without creating new divisions among Member States, so that we can gain the widest support for the reform of the Council. Only in so doing will we ensure the legitimacy of that reform.

Today's debate and the contributions and proposals presented by delegations in previous years are a solid foundation for the continuation of our work. I want to assure you, Sir, that the Spanish delegation will continue to offer your presidency, which has already proven its efficiency and forcefulness, the necessary cooperation, so that we may advance in this collective effort of all members of the international community.

Mr. Saliba (Malta): The importance of the item on Security Council reform has been demonstrated once again by the large number of delegations which have taken the floor on this item. The consideration of the reform of this principle organ of the United Nations assumes crucial importance through the role assigned to the Security Council under the Charter to maintain international peace and security.

The debate and discussion on this item have been carried out both in this Assembly and in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform for a number of years. The political impact of the reform of the Security Council on the conduct of international relations necessitates caution and the need to ensure thorough discussion and general agreement on any final outcome of this exercise. The sensitivity attached to this item is justifiable, given the overall effect that any reform will have not only on the manner in which the Security Council functions, but on the role and manner in which the Organization functions, as well as on the role of Member States in the important decisions of this Organization.

The mandate of the Working Group on Security Council reform is well known. While it is clear that both clusters of issues dealt with should be agreed to as a whole, progress in one of the areas should not hinder the other. We have seen useful progress achieved in the area of the working methods of the Security Council, as witnessed in the discussion held on the basis of the paper presented by the Non-Aligned Movement on this issue. The continued development of agreement on enhancing transparency in the working methods of the Security Council is of paramount importance, since, regardless of the final outcome on the question of expansion, the large majority of States will remain, for the most part, excluded from a continued presence on the Council. It is thus the issue of increased transparency of the Council and its enhanced relationship with the General Assembly that is of direct relevance and importance for the larger membership of this Organization.

In this regard, allow me to digress briefly on the issue of the report of the Security Council, which was debated earlier in this session. We welcome the new format of this report and thank those delegations that are currently serving on the Council for their useful and informative insights regarding the debate within the Council on this issue.

The response of the Security Council both to resolution 51/193 and to the discussions in the Working Group on the need for a more analytical and substantive approach was to some extent heeded through the submission of reports practised by the Presidents of the Security Council. However, whereas it may be noted that some of the reports contained some analysis, others were purely factual. When reports are merely factual, their timely distribution is important. It is no use being informed of an event two and a half months after it has occurred, when it is already known through the news media. The general membership should be kept better

informed on a more timely basis. Another factor which needs to be highlighted is the fact that, in the absence of the institutionalization of this practice, the measure remains sporadic. It is also worth noting that such reports have not been forthcoming in recent months.

Returning to the question of the expansion of the Security Council, Malta's position was stated clearly by its Prime Minister at the general debate earlier this year — namely, that expansion should be achieved by increasing the number of non-permanent seats to the Council. The question of permanence has today attracted much attention in our discussion because of the difficulties which have been encountered in reconciling the concepts of enhanced representativity and permanent solutions.

The questions that remain are whether the historical realities that influenced the Council's composition 50 years ago could be paralleled or matched by present contingencies and whether factors that are non-permanent and change over time can determine permanence. The balance and existing ratio between the different categories of membership should not be eroded into one that favours the permanent status. It is the non-permanent category that best reflects the democratic principle and is therefore the one that needs to be enhanced.

The overall question of any future composition of the Council is of direct relevance to small States such as ours. We have to view the choices we make today in terms of setting precedents for the future. There is admittedly a clear link between the overall size of the Council and its categories of membership. The expansion of the permanent category today would set a precedent for future expansions of this kind, given that current decisions would be taken based on criteria that are themselves changing. This could pave the way for a situation where, in future, other States might lay claim to qualification as permanent members.

This could ultimately lead to an erosion of the concept of rotation through a non-permanent presence on the Council, which is where the larger majority of States, particularly smaller ones, will continue to serve given the constraints on the overall size of the Council to preserve efficiency. It is thus that we view such safeguards as those contained in Article 23.2 on the prohibition of immediate re-election to the non-permanent category as a guarantee of the ability of all Member States to serve and to continue to serve in future on the Security Council.

We believe that it is time to consider in-depth within the Working Group on Security Council reform the well-known Non-Aligned Movement position that in order to overcome lack of agreement on the increase of other categories of membership, expansion should for the time being take place in the non-permanent category only.

The examination of the question of the veto remains central to all our discussions on Security Council reform. This is particularly so in the light of the various discussions on the decision-making process of the Security Council and the proposals regarding rotation in the permanent categories. As stated by my Prime Minister, Malta is not in favour of extending the right of veto. The issue of the veto cannot be detached from an overall understanding on any eventual reform of the Council, especially in view of the clear position of the Non-Aligned Movement that the use of the veto should be curtailed to Chapter VII of the Charter, with a view to its eventual elimination.

Security Council reform remains one of the important tasks before our Organization. Hasty solutions would not be beneficial to the United Nations. We must continue to strive to achieve a general and genuine agreement on the various facets of Security Council reform. Any road we embark upon must have the guaranteed political support necessary to see the process through. The Open-ended Working Group has in the past shown itself able to discuss the various issues even if general agreement, for the time being, on any particular solution still escapes us. This should not be of concern or an admission of defeat, but should rather reinforce our will to continue genuine, open and detailed discussions with a view to identifying solutions on which general agreement can be reached.

Mr. Jusys (Lithuania): The Security Council and the General Assembly are the most important United Nations bodies, yet the Council represents less than a twelfth of United Nations membership. Over time, its share in the entire membership has decreased, while its importance has increased. With this discrepancy and the membership of other United Nations bodies in mind, it is clear that the Security Council is too small to ensure an equitable geographical representation.

The records of our four years of discussions, which sometimes appear to be an endless intellectual exercise, could by now fill a thick textbook on international politics — perhaps even a best-seller. But what results have been achieved?

The most important issues, such as those relating to the right of veto, regional rotation, the final size of the Security Council, and many others, remain unresolved. At least there is an interim result: many of us have spoken out, which has yielded many general ideas and concrete details. As a result, several comprehensive proposals are on the table; a few may be under the table; and some are being kept in the files, yet are mature enough to be negotiating texts.

We need to be honest with ourselves in admitting that the reform is stalled due not only to genuine concerns about equity and efficiency, but also because somewhere two neighbours cannot agree on matters irrelevant to this exercise, or because the five permanent members of the Security Council do not want their privileges to be taken away, diluted or shared.

Lithuania is not a big country and therefore is without the anxiety of bigger nations to be acknowledged for making greater contributions to international peace and security. Size and importance do not have exactly the same meaning here as in the case of equality among nations. We recognize that tall people make the best basketball players and thus do not claim that this constitutes discrimination against short people. The different international significance of various countries is a reality we cannot ignore. Some countries are willing and able to be exceptionally useful for the common good and universal purposes and not only for their own interests. Having them permanently on the Security Council could serve global interests.

New permanent members would have to be subjected to a transparent and effective review, the mechanism of which — for the sake of fairness — should be applied to the current five permanent members as well. In addition, aspirants would have to assume additional responsibilities, including heavier financial burdens.

During the recent debates of the Open-ended Working Group on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council, it was frustrating to listen to the interpretation that permanent seats were for sale to the highest bidder. We see no moral problem there. Though we understand this logic of comparison, there would be only a minor difference between such bids and the traditional campaign for non-permanent seats.

When we say that geographical representation on the Security Council needs to be improved, we do not expect, and in fact do not want, any country literally to represent a region's interests. A State has to represent the universal principles of the United Nations, not regional interests. Rather, we understand equitable geographical representation as offering initially an equal — or perhaps arithmetical — chance for any State from a particular region to be elected to the Security Council. Only then will the merits of the candidates have to be taken into account.

In this regard, our regional Group of Eastern European States is under-represented, that is, given fewer opportunities than it deserves. But we also have to ensure that should any Group get additional seats, the situation is not reversed to the disadvantage of other regional Groups. The smaller the size of the Council, the bigger the difference made by one additional seat and the greater the disadvantages that might result. This is an arithmetically simple but politically complex issue. And this is the compelling reason why the Security Council has to be sufficiently large, certainly bigger than today.

We understand the concerns about the Council's efficiency, especially when it has to react to challenges swiftly. But at what number of seats will the Security Council risk becoming unbearably inefficient? Numbers such as 21, 23, 24 and 26 have so far been mere numbers, not too different from the random numbers of a lottery. To establish that difference, we must hear credible arguments as to why 21 and not 26, or 23 and not 24, represents the threshold of efficiency.

In fact, it may well be quite the opposite. A reasonably larger and better balanced Council membership means that more views have to be taken into account before a decision is made. The plurality of these views could ensure greater credibility and wider recognition for the Council's decisions and thus a greater acceptance of its authority on the ground. Such an outcome would, in our view, increase the efficiency of the Security Council. The potential difficulties in decision-making in a bigger Council could easily be tackled through adapted procedures, some elements of which are reflected in the proposals of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

One of the difficulties that the Working Group faced was the different interpretations of general agreement — something at which we should eventually arrive. The resolution adopted on 3 December 1993 and which initially called for general agreement did not specify whether this should be "a" or "the" general agreement.

The absence of the definite article leads us to think that it is up to us to decide what is general agreement — another puzzle. According to one attempt at definition, general agreement would lie somewhere between consensus and the consent of the two thirds of all Members, as required for United Nations Charter amendments. General agreement would then mean the consent of at least 155 States.

We could also say that general agreement could be the consent of two thirds of United Nations Members, as necessary to amend the Charter. After all, if two thirds, including the five permanent members of the Council, amend the Charter, then that is how the reform could formally be carried out.

Yet we would like to see wider agreement, with no losers at the end. The reform must accommodate the legitimate interests of every State. Some obvious lessons we have learned here are that we must match not only the Security Council to the reality but our ambitions, aspirations and interests too, and that nothing will come out of this attempt without compromise.

We can already achieve compromise in some areas and get closer to general agreement. First of all, middle ground can be found on the size of an enlarged Security Council. The average of the extreme views on numbers of seats is 23 or 24. So let us start from there. Secondly, some States argue that both categories of membership have to be expanded as a package deal, that is simultaneously. Others, like the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, say that if no general agreement is reached only the non-permanent category should grow for the time being. These two views are shared by a combined number of probably 155 States, enough for one of the versions of a general agreement. A compromise between them could be expansion of one category, perhaps the non-permanent category, provided that there is agreement that the other category would be enlarged reasonably soon thereafter.

Thirdly, if Cluster II issues are not taken hostage by Cluster I, it should not be too difficult to agree on more transparent and accountable working procedures for the Security Council. Fourthly, the permanent five could agree by voluntary declarations to limit the scope of the application of their veto right to items falling under Chapter VII of the Charter, with the understanding or the agreement that the right of veto should continue to be reviewed. The overwhelming majority believes that the veto is unjust, primitive and unnecessary. The best testimony that it is obsolete is the paradox that an attempt to limit the veto might itself be vetoed. The wish of many, including non-aligned countries, that this right should be applicable only to matters of international peace and security and that it should not be used to obstruct reform is legitimate and worth a compromise.

Fifthly, some States want to proceed with restructuring according to a certain schedule so that it will not be prolonged eternally. Others, like the Non-Aligned Movement, say that they would resist any imposed time-frame. Fine; let there be no imposed time-frame, but how about an agreed-upon time-frame?

I regret having had to speak in such general terms. It would have been much more desirable to comment on concrete negotiating proposals. However, some of us still even seem to be in doubt about the need to reform the Security Council. For Lithuania, the answer has always been clear and positive.

We commend Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, and Chairman of the Working Group, for his contribution to the reform process. He did what the President of the General Assembly was expected to do: he was creative, he was willing to compromise, and he acted in the interests of all.

We hope that you, Mr. President, will continue in Ambassador Razali's spirit. The road ahead is curvy and bumpy, but we are confident that you will sustain good traction with the support of States like mine.

Mr. Priedkalns (Latvia): The primary aim of the United Nations is to create an environment amongst nations conducive to the development and maintenance of international peace and security. Hence, the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council is of paramount importance for long-term global stability. Progress towards this goal must necessarily acknowledge the diversity of today's world and the valuable contributions to global security that developing nations and small nations are able to make. Progress towards global security also involves the participation of non-governmental organizations, courts and civil and transnational organizations.

The world today needs a United Nations that is responsive and that can contribute effectively to the resolution of human injustice and conflicts. An effective contribution requires wide representation and a broad consensus of global opinion. While full consensus on a

proposal to restructure the Security Council is probably unobtainable, we must nonetheless respect the requirements of the Charter in any resolution adopting amendments relating to the Council's structure. The statutory two-thirds majority would be such a requirement.

Four years have passed since the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. During this time Member States have agreed on the objective of the enlargement process but, disappointingly, have been unable to achieve a ratifiable proposal for enlargement.

We must acknowledge in this process the valuable consultations amongst Member States carried out last year by Ambassadors Razali, Breitenstein and Jayanama; they deserve our gratitude. Their conclusions indicate that the vast majority of States want a significant enlargement in both categories of membership, permanent and non-permanent, and an increase in the representation of industrially developing countries in both categories.

Our debate today deals with equitable representation. Overall this is a difficult concept, because the result of a vote in the Council or the Assembly should rightly represent the proportion not only of countries supporting a viewpoint, but also of people endorsing that position. As some votes represent a thousand times more people than other votes, the notion of equitable representation becomes questionable if it is based solely on the number of Member States. In order to achieve a more appropriate basis of representation of global opinion, world populations must be considered. Thus a realistic basis for effective Security Council function would include the concept of permanent membership for Member States with large populations and significant economic and security systems. At the same time, non-permanent membership would offer other States opportunities to contribute to the maintenance of global justice, peace and security. A Member State, no matter how small in terms of population, and whatever its status in terms of economic development, may prove to make a worthwhile and valuable contribution to the debate on global security. A rotating Council membership for these States would more effectively represent the global diversity of our world today than models offering limited membership opportunities. A wide consensus of opinion, though probably not unanimity, on reform is more likely to be achieved with broad representation of States.

Security Council reform is too important a question to be decided by narrow margins of majority opinion. Instead, a broad consensus of support is required, and it is important that no major contributors to world events be excluded.

The delegation of Latvia wishes to recall its proposal, described during last year's debate on Security Council reform, that Council reform be implemented gradually, in several stages, and with regard to a mode of expansion of the Council consistent with keeping open all options with regard to the future composition of the Council. Flexibility and political goodwill are needed by all of us at this time.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): This is the fourth time in as many General Assembly sessions that we have discussed a report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. Considerable energy has been invested in efforts for the reform of the Security Council, and much time has been spent in discussions on various aspects of that reform. I would like to use this occasion to pay particular tribute to the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassadors Fredrik Wilhelm Breitenstein of Finland and Asda Jayanama of Thailand, for their tireless work as well as for the considerable patience and diplomatic skill they have demonstrated. Moreover, I wish especially to emphasize the importance of the contribution made during the past year by Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, last year's Chairman of the Working Group and the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

The progress made during the last year has been considerable. The Working Group has entered the negotiating stage and reached the threshold of decision-making. However, the time for specific decisions has not yet come. The progress made and the elements of possible decisions are not yet fully developed, let alone put together into a coherent package. On the other hand, the progress achieved has made it clearer than before that future proposals must be of such quality and coherence that they will command ratification by two thirds of United Nations Member States, including all the permanent members of the Security Council; hence the special importance of the current consideration of Security Council reform issues.

The General Assembly should, at its present session, provide clear guidance regarding the Working Group's

future work, based on proper appreciation of the progress made so far. In this effort, the Assembly should proceed from the needs of the Organization as a whole and from an objective assessment of progress made. Specific interests and needs of different groups of States should not obscure the general picture.

Proceeding from this understanding of the situation at hand, I wish to contribute a few remarks on the current state of work on the reform of the Security Council and on the priorities for the coming year. I shall not repeat the basic views of Slovenia on the issues involved. These views were expressed in the Working Group and are reflected in the discussion paper prepared by a group of like-minded States which appears as Annex III of the report of the Open-ended Working Group [A/51/47]. Instead, I propose to deal with several basic issues which, in the opinion of our delegation, require special attention at the present General Assembly session.

We believe that the first requirement for successful work lies in the need for a clear understanding on the future method of work. In this regard, it is important to note that the General Assembly has already decided, in its decision 51/476 of 15 September 1997, that the Open-ended Working Group should continue its work. There is no need for any additional decisions by the General Assembly at this stage. It is important that the Working Group continue its work on the basis of the progress made so far, with a view to formulating appropriate recommendations as soon as possible.

When we refer to the progress made so far, we mean all aspects of the work hitherto accomplished by the Working Group. They include the already existing agreements on the necessary improvements related to the methods of work of the Security Council, the findings of the Vice-Chairmen, who held extensive consultations in the early months of this year, and the "complete picture" offered by the Chairman of the Working Group, which is reproduced in Annex II of the report. The Chairman's document provides a useful point of departure for further discussion and negotiations.

The progress made so far has a number of different aspects. There are certain areas in which the contours of an agreement are already emerging. The issues of methods of work — the cluster II issues — are such an example. There are other, perhaps more interesting areas where the discussion has helped in identifying the issues which need to be discussed further. I wish to refer briefly to three such issues.

The first among them relates to the proposals to expand the number of permanent members of the Security Council. That idea has gained strong support among the members of the Working Group and, as a result of that support, various suggestions have been made with regard to the method of selection and the precise status of new permanent members. It is important to note that the discussions in the Working Group showed that those delegations which support the expansion of the number of permanent members of the Security Council, generally speaking, wish the new permanent members to be sought from all five regional groups, so as to improve the regional representation and balance in that category of Council members. This is a welcome development, which we support. Furthermore, we encourage the continuation of discussion regarding the role of the regional groups in identifying the new permanent members of the Security Council. The ideas related to regional rotation which were expressed in the course of the discussions in the Working Group should be studied further in that context, given that one region suggested such an arrangement for itself.

A second and related aspect which emerged in the discussions of the Working Group concerns the status of new permanent members, should general agreement be reached on expansion of that category of members of the Security Council. Here we would strongly support the principle of non-discrimination. We believe that the credibility of proposals for expansion in the category of permanent members requires that all candidates be treated as equals.

Furthermore, for the same reason, we believe that the status of new permanent members should be comparable to that of the present permanent members. Introduction, either directly or indirectly, of semi-permanent status would not contribute to the advancement of the objectives of Security Council reform.

The Working Group should further discuss these issues, and they are complicated. In this context, we would like to draw attention to the concept of reasonable differentiation, a well-established concept in law which provides for the necessary flexibility in the application of the principle of non-discrimination. The Working Group would make a major contribution if it could define the modalities of identification and of the status of new permanent members, which ought to be in accordance with the general principle of non-discrimination.

The third issue relates to the proposals for curtailment of the veto. Such proposals have been made since before the establishment of the Working Group, and additional proposals were made more recently. Over the last year, it has become increasingly clear that substantive progress is needed in that domain in order to develop a sufficiently comprehensive and ratifiable package. We suggest that the issue of the veto be given special priority in the forthcoming discussions in the Working Group.

I have referred to three sets of substantive issues which we consider to be of particular importance at this stage and which need to be addressed in the future work of the Working Group: the mode of identification of new permanent members, the status of new permanent members and the question of the veto. These issues are difficult and require careful consideration. It would be imprudent to propose any artificial time limits or any decisions with implications for the substance prior to completion of discussion of the issues. On the other hand, it might be useful to set realistic target dates for an exhaustive consideration of the major issues to be addressed, such as those that I have discussed in this statement.

It goes without saying that Slovenia is prepared to continue to participate in this process, and we hope that the Working Group will make further progress at the next stage of its work.

Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino): Today I have the honour to address this Assembly on the item entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other related matters".

Let me first congratulate Ambassador Breitenstein and Ambassador Jayanama on their re-election as co-Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group. We have always appreciated their efforts in the common interest. Their task has not been, and will not be, an easy one.

The Republic of San Marino has always followed the work of this Group with deep interest. We are convinced that the reform of the Security Council is necessary, and it is a priority for the future of this Organization. In fact, this organ has to reflect, on the one hand, the new world order, assuring equitable geographical representation, and, on the other, it has to answer with efficacy and rapidity to the new challenges of our time.

The Republic of San Marino is one of the sponsors of draft resolution A/52/L.7, because it is convinced of the need for an increase in the membership of the Security Council. We also believe that such an important decision has to be adopted by consensus or with the widest possible agreement.

However, we have to acknowledge that the present political situation is not yet ready to achieve this kind of consensus. That is why my delegation attaches particular importance to the provisions contained in Article 108 of the United Nations Charter, and believes that a "minimum quorum" of a two-thirds majority of Member States should also apply to all decisions which may have Charter amendment implications.

A hasty decision, reached in the present climate characterized by divergences and fractures, could seriously jeopardize future United Nations initiatives. We deem it wiser and more fruitful to continue consultations inside the Group to reach a well-defined agreement, even if this could, unfortunately, mean a longer wait.

The Working Group is in our opinion the most appropriate forum for an open and general discussion among all countries, without exclusion, one to which all Member States may bring their own contributions to this important debate.

These are the only reasons why my Government decided to subscribe to the draft resolution. It is absolutely not true that we are against reforms and that we want to postpone them indefinitely.

My country is in favour of an increase in the non-permanent membership. This would ensure the better participation of all countries in the Security Council, with more equitable geographical representation, through democratic elections in the General Assembly. The contribution of a State does not consist in its merely becoming a member of the Security Council; we should select for that organ the most qualified candidates in a particular period of history.

Eighty-two States Members of this Organization have never been members of the Security Council. Their participation in the democratic election of qualified Members to represent them in that organ has been an equally valuable contribution. An increase in the non-permanent membership would also strengthen the basic principles contained in the Charter, because every country would have an equal opportunity to be elected. Such an increase, supported by almost all delegations, could be finalized right now, as could other issues such

as the improvement of the transparency and methods of work of the Security Council.

The Republic of San Marino believes that reform has to take place, but that it could be done gradually. As far as an increase in the permanent membership and the veto power are concerned, it seems clear to us that a wide consensus does not exist. Too many obstacles are still present and too many questions have not been fully answered. San Marino considers that a quick fix would represent an approximate solution which would crystallize an Organization that should, on the contrary, reflect the political, social and economic changes in the world.

We have all learned from Greek philosophy the concept of *panta rei* — "everything flows"; why should we ignore it now? My delegation wonders if it is politically correct and if it is really the intention of the General Assembly to confer, for the first time since the establishment of the United Nations, privileges to a few countries on the basis of their dimensions or economic power. We also wonder if it is fair to correct a favouritism undoubtedly justified by particular historical circumstances with a further inequity. This would not represent a mere amendment of the Charter, but would hurt the basic principles on which this Organization is founded.

Furthermore, it could constitute a dangerous precedent to be applied to other organs of the United Nations system, compromising the principle of equality among all countries. These and other problems could be overcome, and the Republic of San Marino trusts that further negotiations among countries, with a constructive attitude, could contribute to facilitating a compromise solution favouring the interests of the Organization and of all its Members.

Mr. Bune (Fiji): Let me say at the outset that Fiji is totally committed to the reform of the Security Council, which we believe is vitally important to the future of the United Nations and its membership.

Last year in the General Assembly, I registered my country's concern at the lack of equitable geographical representation in the membership of the Council, both at the permanent and non-permanent level. That, in our view, is clearly incompatible with the letter and spirit of the Charter and has permanently resulted in more than 80 Member States of our Organization being denied the opportunity to serve on the Council.

To redress these imbalances and ensure equitable geographical representation, we had proposed to the General Assembly that the number of permanent members of the Council be increased by five: one seat going to Japan, one to Germany, one to the developing States of Asia, one to the developing States of Latin America and the Caribbean and one to the developing States of Africa. We also suggested that the new permanent members should have the same powers, including the veto, as the current five permanent members. We now believe, however, that the veto power should be eliminated. If it is to be retained at all, then, as we suggested previously, its scope and use should apply only to issues related to Chapter VII of the Charter. With respect to the non-permanent members, we had recommended that the increase should be by seven. Seats for Africa and Asia should be increased from the present five to nine; for Eastern Europe, from the present one to two; for Latin America and the Caribbean, from the present two to three; and for Western European and other States, from the present two to three.

In our view, the additional seven seats for the non-permanent members would help address the current unbalanced regional representation, ensure broader representation of developing countries and translate such representation into a new international environment.

It is in the light of these observations that our delegation finds some of the recommendations of the Open-ended Working Group, as contained in document A/51/47, to be detrimental to the interests of a vast majority of small developing countries. While we are keen to see the reform of the Council move ahead without undue delay, we must register our concern that any quick fixes based on change for the sake of change, and which fail to address the present inequitable, unrepresentative and undemocratic structure of the Council, will only result in the continuation of a Council which does not have the support and confidence of the majority of Member States.

It is becoming more evident in the current debate on reform that a partial or selective expansion in the membership of the Security Council, without properly addressing the question of equitable regional geographical representation and the geopolitical realities of the post-cold-war era, cannot be regarded as constituting

> "a durable and significant enlargement", [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 62nd meeting]

as it was described by the representative of one of the permanent members of the Security Council this morning. It is thus clear that the only way to satisfactorily resolve the problem of equitable regional geographical representation, given the lack of political will by Member States from some regions to agree to a just and fair rotation system, is to review the current configuration of regional groups. The current configuration of regional groups has served its purpose, since the number of States which make up the United Nations has increased substantially since 1965, when membership of the Council was last reviewed. The groupings need to be increased to take account not only of geographical reality, but also of the post-cold-war geopolitical realities.

Our recommendation, therefore, for the Pacific States to be recognized as constituting a distinct subregion of the Asian Group, is consistent with this approach. As the Caribbean is recognized as a distinct subregion of the Latin American Group, we are confident that this proposal will not create any undesirable precedent and, if accepted, would reinforce the Council's legitimacy and credibility as a truly representative organ.

It is our humble submission, therefore, that on the basis of the United Nations principles of the sovereign equality of all Member States and universality of membership, as well as on the basis of equitable geographic representation, the Pacific subregion, which includes the 14 independent Pacific island States and Australia and New Zealand, should be recognized as a geopolitical region of the Asian Group for the purpose of regional representation in the Security Council.

Just a few days ago a permanent member of the Security Council called for the temporary admission into the Group of Western European and other States of a certain Member State. This flexible and innovative way of approaching the reconfiguration of the United Nations is to be encouraged and commended, as it is based on present-day political realities. It is in the same spirit that we have also called for the allocation of one additional non-permanent seat for the League of Arab States. There is also no reason why the European Union should not be a group of its own, especially taking into account its short- and long-term plans to include in its membership a certain number of Eastern European countries. Perhaps the United States, Canada and other like-minded States may also form a separate group.

The Security Council was created as a principal organ of the United Nations in 1945, at a critical time in the history of our world. It was a time when the world and international relations were bipolarized. We had two super-Powers. We had two conflicting ideologies. We had new weapons of mass destruction. The Security Council was pre-eminently vital to the international community at that time, and the veto power was necessary for the permanent members in a crisis situation. The eminent role of the Security Council then, and for years thereafter, was the prevention of global conflict or a third world war. There were several situations in the decades after 1945 that could have led to global conflict. The Security Council contributed immensely to the prevention of global conflict. We commend it for its achievements. But with the greatest respect, we believe that it has served its purpose. With a unipolar system now and with the positive initiatives being taken in regions and subregions throughout the world to respond to intra-State conflicts, with the regional approach to peace and security and economic and social development, I submit that the Security Council, as currently structured, has outlived its *raison d'être* and has become anachronistic in our world of today.

The second reason is that the Security Council in today's world has become a caste system, to borrow a term from a European delegation. We have permanent members and we have non-permanent members. We have members who can cast the veto and those who cannot. It is therefore clear that the Council's present structure is neither equitable nor democratic. It perpetrates a system of discrimination against States by unduly limiting the participation of many Member States on the Security Council, and they will likely never serve on it if the current trend continues. We should not and cannot have a discriminating caste system within the walls of an Organization that espouses democracy, human rights and the sovereign and equal rights of States.

The status quo of the Council permits any one of the five permanent members to influence the decision of all 15 members through the use of the veto. The five permanent members are not elected, rendering the system undemocratic. The system 15 members to decide for 185 Member countries without a democratic right of appeal, and the remaining 170 members are sidelined and without a veto. Democracy in decision-making is about the will of the majority, not the superiority of the will of one or two States over the majority will. We should not, therefore, focus only on a marginal increase in members; we must focus on real change. Any such change or reform should include a provision that if a permanent member uses the veto power, the use of that veto should

be subject to another permanent member's right of appeal to the General Assembly for a final decision, and the decision of the General Assembly on the appeal should be on the basis of a two-thirds-majority vote. This will ensure that the Council functions in a structured relationship with the General Assembly, which should be the paramount organ of the United Nations.

In our humble view, the present recommendations for reform are merely quick fixes, do not go to the heart of the matter, are changes simply for the sake of change and take no account of our contemporary world. The recommendations can be likened to putting new wine into an old wineskin. That, we believe, is a widely held view, as well.

My delegation wants a just, democratic and enlightened reform of the Security Council. Any reform would require a revision of the Charter of the United Nations. We submit that such a revision should not be entertained in a piecemeal process in which the views of the majority of Member States go unheard. We therefore call for the convening in the first year of the new millennium of a summit conference of Heads of State and Heads of Government to draft a new Charter for our Organization, founded on a universal and collective vision of the role and functions of the United Nations and of all its organs in the next century.

Mr. Reyn (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): This Assembly has devoted yet another year to the debate on reform of the Security Council. It may be another year, but it is not a wasted year. On the contrary, the active participation of Member States, the skilful guidance of our two Vice-Chairmen — our colleagues from Finland and Thailand — and the bold and responsible initiatives of President Razali have helped move the debate forward. The various positions have been set out very clearly, and some have evolved. It is true that differences remain, but they are not insuperable.

An improvement in the representativity of the members of the Council to reflect more fully the developments in international society remains essential. An improvement in representativity, by balancing geographical distribution, should also strengthen the legitimacy of the Security Council. Today we are approaching consensus on this principle.

The debates within the Working Group have helped us identify some parameters that, in our view, should serve as points of reference in the context of a general agreement. These include: first, an increase in the two categories of members; secondly, an enlarged Council of more than 21 States in order to reflect balance, both geographical and between the two categories of members; thirdly, election by the General Assembly of the new permanent members; fourthly, limits on the scope and use of the right of veto; and fifthly, periodic reviews.

These principles, for the most part, have been taken up in document A/AC.247/1997/CRP.1, submitted under the chairmanship of President Razali in March this year. They are also contained in document A/AC.247/1997/CRP.2, submitted by our Group and contained in the report to the General Assembly [A/51/47].

Some of these principles are still questionable in the eyes of several delegations. Certain examples of discrimination call for solutions aimed at reducing them. For example, there is that between permanent members and non-permanent members, between those that have the right of veto and the others, between members of the Security Council and all the other members of the Organization.

In this regard, the discrimination related to the use of the right of veto must be seriously considered. Belgium deplores the timidity of the solutions considered thus far. We continue to believe that the decision on limiting the scope and use of the right of veto must go hand in hand with the decision to expand the Council. The restriction of the right of veto should be part of the final arrangement that will be submitted to our Parliaments for ratification. As regards the substance, we think that a unilateral declaration of old and new permanent members remains the most feasible procedure. It offers the advantage of avoiding an additional modification to the Charter. However, it can only be implemented if the content of the unilateral declaration is sufficiently precise and goes beyond a simple reaffirmation of what already exists.

Moreover, serious efforts must be made as regards another kind of discrimination, that relating to information and the participation of non-members in the decisions taken by the Security Council. Improvements in the working methods of the Council must be more substantial and their application must be more effective. It is a question not of further regulating and institutionalizing, but, above all, of practising transparency on a daily basis. The members of the Council must never forget that they have no rights of

ownership on subjects relating to peace and security. Their mandate is only to discharge the duties imposed on them by the responsibilities with which the international community has entrusted them.

Lastly, there is discrimination against the medium Powers that contribute substantially and continuously by providing human, logistic and financial resources, particularly in the context of peacekeeping operations. The interests of these States deserve greater consideration. Their role in the activities of this Organization must be re-evaluated, in particular by the permanent members of the Security Council. The delegations that feel these frustrations must be heard. A frank, calm and transparent explanation is still needed. An attempt can be made to accommodate their particular concerns, without compromising the general interest.

During our long debates, some apparently creative but rather vague ideas make headway without meeting obstacles. This is the case, in particular, with the false good idea of regional rotation for certain permanent seats on the Council. I note that after more than a year of debates on this point we are no further along as regards the content of the idea or the political and legal consequences of its implementation. What does seem to us to be very clear is that the principle of regional rotation will be very difficult to implement, even by the regional groups that might apply it. Moreover, this principle will, in our opinion, inevitably introduce a further discrimination in addition to those I have mentioned. Unlike some other delegations, we think that the inclusion of this idea in the final package will only take us further from general agreement.

Having reached this stage of the debate, we feel that progress in future negotiations can be made only if confidence is restored. Many groups and sub-groups, all more or less informal, are studying various aspects of the reform from different angles. These consultations are useful and necessary. The existence of these groups, however, has created suspicion, and distrust has gradually spread. This distrust can only paralyse our debates. We may be sure that the reform of the Security Council will not be pushed through roughly. It will require the consent of the majority. The ideas developed in the informal groups will have to be examined in a transparent manner by the members of the Working Group, and will subsequently be judged by the General Assembly.

Without mutual confidence, the most rigid positions will be maintained, and it will be difficult to leave behind the logic of sterile confrontation. I thank you, Mr. President, for your recent efforts to restore that confidence.

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on this important agenda item, entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters".

Today, 52 years after the foundation of the United Nations, the world situation has changed fundamentally. The need to reform the United Nations in general, and the Security Council in particular, has become even more imperative.

The profound changes during the past half century, especially the enormous increase in the membership of the United Nations, from 51 to 185, mostly as a result of the participation of developing countries, must be taken into consideration in the efforts to reform the United Nations as well as the Security Council. At present developing countries are grossly under-represented on the Council. It is an important task to ensure that the reform includes their greater representation and corrects the existing imbalance between developed and developing countries in the composition of the Security Council.

As the body entrusted by the United Nations Member States under the Charter with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council is required to be both effective and accountable in its work. Therefore, the current reform should aim to enhance not only its effectiveness and efficiency, but also its representativeness, transparency and democratization.

During the last four years extensive discussions on the question of the reform of the Security Council have been taking place at the United Nations, especially in the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. Various proposals and suggestions have been put forward and discussed. We have recorded certain progress in our work. Note should also be taken of the important efforts that have been made to advance further the work of the Working Group in this respect. Although we have not yet come to the time of reaching a generally agreed, satisfactory solution, the discussions so far have further emphasized the urgent need for reform of the Security

Council and an expansion in its membership, and have enabled a greater level of understanding and agreement, especially on certain guiding principles.

Both the reform and expansion of the Security Council must take into account the principles of the sovereign equality of Member States, equitable geographical distribution, accountability, democratization and transparency in the working methods and procedures of the Security Council, including its decision-making process. It is also generally understood that any satisfactory solution should include all these principal elements as a whole reform package. Viet Nam considers it important to advance further our common efforts aimed at finding a reasonable reform formula that meets the shared aspirations and interests of the Member States.

Various initiatives and proposals have been put forward aimed at achieving a comprehensive reform of the Security Council, including the increase in its membership. My delegation fully shares the views of the Non-Aligned Movement regarding the issues of efficiency, expansion, democratization and transparency. Viet Nam supports the increase in the membership of the Council to enhance its representativity and democratic composition and supports the increase in both the permanent and non-permanent membership categories. Along these lines, we find that the proposal to have nine more members in the Security Council — five permanent members and four non-permanent members — may serve as a reasonable proposal.

With regard to new permanent membership, Viet Nam supports the Non-Aligned Movement in stressing that the increase in this category must in all cases include representatives of the developing countries. In this package, we are sympathetic with the views that propose new permanent membership for countries that undertake greater commitment and responsibility, have the capacity to do so and have been making major contributions to the common work of the United Nations. With a flexible approach, we can support the proposal for rotation arrangements as a way to create conditions for United Nations Member countries to participate in and contribute more to the work of the Security Council, if this is agreeable with the majority of Member States.

In connection with the veto, Viet Nam again reaffirms its support for the proposal that the veto should be curtailed with a view to eliminating this undemocratic privilege. As a first step, and for the time being, the veto power should apply only to actions taken under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. While it will in fact take time to achieve the elimination of the veto, we support the proposal that in the meantime veto rights be granted to the new permanent members as well, including cases in which a rotational permanent-membership formula is applied, in order to ensure equality among the permanent members and truly to enhance the role of the developing countries, reducing the abuse of this privilege by some countries.

We are at a critical moment in our endeavour to reform the United Nations and the Security Council. We should make greater efforts to advance further the understanding and progress that have been registered so far. My delegation hopes that the deliberations on this important matter will be continued on the basis of transparency and democracy and with the broadest participation of Member States to achieve a satisfactory solution that can receive the general support of the Member States and meet the expectations of the community of nations, within and outside the United Nations.

Mr. Meléndez-Barahona (El Salvador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am pleased to make this statement in the context of our consideration of agenda item 59, "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters", on behalf of the Central American countries of Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador.

For more than 50 years now, the power structure established in the United Nations Charter, which on more than a few occasions has paralysed the Organization when it came to taking important decisions with a view to executing its mandate, has remained completely unchanged, which is a reflection of the international system in the period following of the Second World War and the existence of divergent goals and interests of States or groups of States, particularly among the permanent members of the Security Council.

The replacement of confrontation by cooperation in the international system that has evolved in the 1990s has awakened very promising expectations of strengthening and enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations system by making fundamental changes in its principal organs that would enable it to fulfil the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter, in particular those relating to the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of the economic and social development of nations.

Our position on Security Council reform was expressed in the statements made by the Central American Presidents at the meetings commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations; in the statements made by them or by our Foreign Ministers in the general debate in 1995 and 1996; and in the joint statements of the Central American delegations in 1995 and 1996 when the agenda item was discussed in plenary.

We have participated in and followed with interest the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, whose mandate is to endeavour to achieve a general agreement aimed at greater representativity, democracy, effectiveness and legitimacy in the work of that organ, in keeping with the demands and realities of the modern world.

This year, after almost four years of considering the item and holding consultations with Member States, we continue to attach great interest to this issue, as evidenced in the statement made in the Working Group in March by the delegation of Costa Rica, which described 1997 as the year of United Nations reform, an idea that was reaffirmed by the Secretary-General at this session during the debate on his proposed reform programme.

We consider that the Chairman and the co-Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group on this important question have made commendable efforts to put forward initiatives that take into account the interests of all States Members and that their efforts deserve our particular gratitude in that they constitute a good basis for moving towards a more advanced stage of the reform process.

However, the proposals of certain countries or groups of countries are still standing and since they have been reaffirmed at meetings of the Working Group we have at present very little reason for optimism with regard to efforts to achieve progress in fundamental areas of Security Council reform.

Our position has been expressed on other occasions, and we wish to restate it, specifically in the areas we consider most pertinent.

Reform of the Security Council is an imperative; it is an integral part of the reform process of the United Nations system and should not, by its very nature, be subject to a specific timetable. Neither, however, should it be allowed an indefinite time-frame or be restricted solely to the question of increasing the number of members.

The Security Council needs to be strengthened and given a fully legitimate, democratic, effective and transparent character, particularly if it is to carry out its mandate in the interests of all Members of the Organization that contribute to the financing of its operations. It should be a body set up to respond to the global and priority interests of the international community and not the special interests of a single country or group of countries.

We support an increase in new permanent and non-permanent members on the basis of the principle of the sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with the rights and obligations set forth in the Charter for both categories of members. This distribution of seats should take into account the interests and aspirations of the Latin American and Caribbean region.

We favour an adequate and rational increase in permanent and non-permanent members that will guarantee representativity for all geographical regions in such a way as not to undermine the capacity and efficiency of the Security Council in discharging its lofty responsibilities.

As to the right of the veto, since it is not feasible to eliminate it at this time, its use should be limited to Chapter VII of the Charter, with a gradual, clear-cut tendency towards its elimination, in order fully to comply with Article 2 of the Charter, which establishes that the Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of States. In particular, the use of the veto should be limited in order to avoid the abuse of a privilege that in no circumstances should be used to secure unilateral advantages unrelated to the objective of the maintenance of international peace and security, which is the primary responsibility of the Security Council.

With respect to working methods and procedure, we would note that although certain improvements have been made, these need to be further pursued. We believe that until there is an agreement on modifying the structure of the Organization, in particular that of the Security Council, top priority should be given to efforts aimed at improving methods of work and procedure in order to enhance the capacity of that organ on the basis of greater transparency and democratization in the decision-making process, so that responsibilities can be shared.

There should also be greater coordination with the General Assembly, the specialized agencies and programmes and international financial institutions, which we believe carry out important functions complementing political endeavours to achieve the objectives of international peace and security, since peace, security and development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

If we want the United Nations to be a strong and fully legitimate multilateral institution that inspires trust and enjoys credibility, we must be convinced of the need for change and have the political will to effect such change. On two occasions, at the highest political level — in the summit declaration of the Heads of State and Government of the members of the Security Council on 31 January 1992 and in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations — we expressed our commitment and determination to reorient the Organization so as to provide more and better services to humankind. However, we cannot be fully satisfied with the subsequent implementation.

If we are convinced that the United Nations is a unique institution, essential and irreplaceable in the international system by virtue of its broad and far-reaching mandate and its potential to respond to the problems of peoples — particularly those of the developing countries — we should act realistically and resolutely in order to reform and revitalize its principal organs, including the Security Council, and make a concerted joint effort that will enable us to achieve agreements reflecting balance among the diverse interests of the international community, without sacrificing the purposes and principles defined in the Charter.

On the basis of the experience of the Working Group, and on the basis of international realities, we reaffirm the importance of taking into account the aspirations and interests of the developing countries in the context of Security Council reform and the right of those countries to have those aspirations and interests addressed.

We urge the Member States that have presented proposals on reform to make a joint effort to take up the historical responsibility and the moral and political obligation that will make change viable in order to pass on to future generations an institution that will respond efficiently to the challenges of the future and the hopes of the peoples in whose name the Organization was created.

We hope that in 1998 the spirit of reform that has prevailed at the regular session will continue with the same impetus and that States will reconsider their positions, will be more flexible, will redouble their efforts to surmount their differences, will show political resolve and will implement the declarations of commitment of the Heads of State and Government so that the United Nations can be strengthened in its capacity to act as a guarantor of international peace and security in response to the demands and challenges of a world situation that is constantly changing and becoming increasingly complex.

Mr. Saguier Caballero (Paraguay) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: May I first of all say how important my delegation regards this debate on agenda item 59, on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

At a time when the tensions peculiar to a bipolar world have been defused, the human race must face new challenges that endanger international peace and security. In order to respond properly to such developments, there is an unquestionable need to reform the Security Council.

Our Organization needs a Security Council with a strengthened capacity to respond effectively and efficiently to the problems of the maintenance of international peace and security.

We consider that the work done by the Open-ended Working Group, which has gone on for four years now and which will resume next January, has been necessary and has made it possible to move ahead faster and to respond to the widespread feeling among Member States concerning the need to increase the membership of the Security Council, although at this stage it should be recognized that in some respects there are profound differences, that need to be surmounted. But how could it be otherwise with 185 States? On the other hand, there are many other aspects on which full agreement has been reached.

For this reason, it is our view that we should keep very much in mind the conclusion of the Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group that a very large majority supported the enlargement of the membership of the Security Council in both categories, permanent and non-permanent.

We cannot hope for consensus on this issue. It does not exist, and it is very unlikely to exist in the near future. However, we can all hope to reach the widest possible general agreement, one that is seen to be in keeping with the requirements of the Charter.

My country, as a member of the Rio Group, endorsed the Declaration of the Summit of Heads of State signed in Asunción on 24 August this year, and we wish once again to reaffirm our full support for the principles contained therein. Paraguay's position is clear-cut and was expressed in the statement made by President Juan Carlos Wasmosy on 23 September in the general debate.

My country reaffirms its view that we are living at a historic moment, and we should take advantage of the opportunity to make a decision on expanding the membership of the Security Council, both in the permanent and in the non-permanent categories.

Paraguay regards it as a sine qua non that a Latin American country be incorporated as a permanent member, together with those countries that in recent years have emerged as important actors in the building of today's world.

As I said a moment ago, Paraguay believes strongly that the increase in Security Council membership should involve both permanent and non-permanent members. In this connection, we believe that regional mechanisms must be developed to prevent the increase on which we ultimately decide from again favouring just a certain few countries, giving them a sort of semi-permanent-membership status. The increase should be balanced and should be of benefit to all Member States.

Paraguay is convinced that this increase would make the Security Council much more representative and lend greater legitimacy to its actions and decisions.

With respect to the veto, Paraguay, which did not agree with its inclusion in 1945, believes that in view of current circumstances, which are very different from those that prompted the establishment of the right of veto, that right should be limited exclusively to matters falling under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

My country hopes the next phase of the exercise will produce fruitful results that will make it possible in the short term to have a rejuvenated and democratized Security Council that is transparent and flexible in its actions and that is noted for its efficient, effective and complete discharge of the lofty responsibility assigned to it by the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Soares (Portugal): The reform of the Security Council, as evidenced by the adoption of resolution 48/26 and the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group, is one of the most important aspects of the comprehensive process of reform of the United Nations, to which we are devoting particular attention during this session of the General Assembly. Each and every Member State seems to agree on the need to enlarge the Security Council in order to enable that body to reflect properly today's world and the evolution of the international community. During the last four years, many creative ideas have been put forward. We feel we now have a global picture of the options available and their implications. It is important to recognize at this stage that the presentation last March by your predecessor, Mr. President — Ambassador Razali — of a comprehensive proposal on the reform of the Security Council, along with the co-Vice-Chairmen's consultations, demonstrated that our discussions have moved in a more concrete direction in the search for a broadly supported decision. For the first time since we began our work it seems that we are in position to see what the large majority of Member States want or do not want.

The position of Portugal on the reform of the Security Council was generally reflected in a document that we submitted to the Working Group together with a number of other Member States. However, I would like to offer some additional comments.

Portugal concurs with others that the enlargement of the Security Council should contemplate both the permanent and the non-permanent categories. This enlargement must take into account new political and economic realities and ensure equitable geographical representation reflecting the increased general membership, particularly from the developing world. A balance should be struck between the categories of permanent and non-permanent members. The Portuguese Foreign Minister had the opportunity to address this question in detail during the general debate of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

We also share the general concern regarding the veto power and the distortion of the principles and aims of the Charter it might entail. However, assuming that it would be unrealistic at this time to eliminate the veto power, we see no reason why the new permanent members should be deprived of it. They will have democratic legitimacy on the basis of their election. However, in this respect we see merit in the proposals to establish a list of matters that will not be subject to veto and to institute some form of collective veto applicable to all permanent members. Another element that in our view

should constitute an essential condition to be met by all permanent members is their acceptance in full of the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.

But in discussing the size and shape of the Security Council we should not lose sight of the need to enhance the transparency of its work. Portugal believes particular emphasis should be given to the review of the working methods of the Security Council, not only in order to strengthen the transparency of its decision-making process, but also to create conditions that will improve non-members' ability to follow the work of the Council.

We have been a member of the Council for the last 12 months. Our experience there has led us to believe that most of the discussions we have had inside that small room could have been held before all interested Member States. The transparency and accountability of the Council would thus be substantially improved.

We understand the arguments of those Member States that are in favour of more time being given to consultations. But we may have explored almost all possible ideas for making the reform of the Security Council happen. A consensus solution on this issue is obviously the desirable outcome of our work. We therefore welcome the decision that no action will be taken at this stage.

But, in our view, the reform of the Security Council cannot be held hostage *ad aeternum* pending such a consensus. We will probably end up needing to vote. In that case, we recognize the need to respect the requirements of Article 108 in a resolution adopting amendments to the Charter. We believe that we should start our work next January, with a view to broadening the trend that now seems to have the support of the vast majority of Member States.

For our part, we are ready to engage in efforts to reconcile the views of the greatest possible number. We are also ready to start narrowing the scope of our work. That means we should look at a number of questions, and we should try to find appropriate answers. It also means that we should identify which measures are achievable, or at least which measures have the support of a large majority of the membership of the United Nations. As I have already said, it is time to move forward. It is time to identify and to adopt specific recommendations on the reform of the Security Council.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting.

In view of the large number of speakers still remaining on the list of speakers for agenda item 59, the General Assembly will continue its consideration of the agenda item tomorrow morning and afternoon until the list of speakers is exhausted.

Programme of work

The President: The consideration of Agenda item 41, "Assistance in mine clearance", originally scheduled for Tuesday, 9 December, is postponed to a later date to be announced, owing to lack of documentation.

The meeting rose at 8.20 p.m.